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Whistler

Sir John Vanbrugh



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VANBRUGH
Architect & Dramatist

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THE EMPEROR HEART

1936



SIR JOHN VANBRUGH, *the portrait painted by
Sir Godfrey Kneller for the Kit-Cat Club.*

KANSAS CITY MO

T Sir John

VANBRUGH

Architect & Dramatist

1664-1726

LAURENCE WHISTLER

*Pyramids, Arches, Obelisks, were but
the irregularities of vain-glory and
wilde enormities of ancient magnanimity*

SIR THOMAS BROWNE



NEW YORK

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FOR URSULA

*I'm in with Captain Vanbrugh at the present,
A most SWEET-NATURED gentleman, and pleasant;
He writes your comedies, draws schemes, and models,
And builds dukes' houses upon very odd hills:
For him, so much I dote on him, that I,
If I was sure to go to heaven, would die.*

NICHOLAS ROWE

THE AUTHOR'S NOTE

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The sonnets on Castle Howard and Scaton Delaval are reprinted from *The Emperor Heart* by courtesy of Wm. Heinemann Ltd.; and all the illustrations with the exception of those facing pages 72, 110, 168, are reproduced by courtesy of *Country Life*.

L.W.

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CASTLE HOWARD

*Roll on, great Howard, through the gorgeous stars
Toward the golden fountain of the date,
Salute the Sun with capital and vase
And the vast heads upon your Satyr Gate.
Those looks compact of evil and delight
Full into morning fat with sunlight, roll,
As once you rolled them into fiery night
In the great storm when you received your soul!*

*When lightning traced you with his fingering flames,
Arch unto arch and cupola to ground,
And thunder all about your streaming frame
Ruined his monstrous Parthenons of sound,
Till you, that scraped acquaintance with the stars,
Laughed in the rumble of your window bars!*

Chapter One

LATE ARRIVAL

*Well hast thou done;
The World was a Fool, e'er since it begun,
And since neither Janus, nor Chronos, nor I,
Can hinder the Crimes,
Or mend the Bad Times,
'Tis better to Laugh than to Cry.*

DRYDEN

IN Restoration London no parish hummed with more industrious life than St. Nicolas Acons, whose gabled houses were full of such worthy men as had for centuries made their City a market of the world: mercers and grocers and silver-smiths, corn merchants and wool merchants; tradesmen of every description, from humble apprentices seldom exploring beyond the sound of their Sunday bells, to grave and solemn persons like Sir John Bridges, who had "imbatailed" the church and been elected Lord Mayor. One winter day in 1664, somewhere among those narrow lanes, John Vanbrugh was born, and on the 24th of January, Mr. Meriton, the Rector, came specially to the house to baptise him, because he was too frail to be taken to church. Mr. Meriton remembered that he had been hastily called to that house only a year before, to christen a little girl, Lucy, on the day she was born. Yet she had lived, which the first two children of Giles and Elizabeth had not.

Giles Vanbrugh's father was a Dutchman, Gillis van Brugg of Ghent, a merchant and the descendant of

merchants The van Bruggs were an old and venerable family, with a coat of arms, and one of them had been Prætor of Ypres in 1383 But the Reformation destroyed the comfortable rhythm of their mediæval lives First the Protestant zeal and then the fire of Alva swept over that flat and windy landscape, and in the anguish of years when families were thinned and businesses broken up, Gillis van Brugg deserted the stricken market place of Europe and crossed over to England "for the enjoyment of the reformed religion " He changed his nationality in London and was received into the Church of England He married an English girl and settled down as a gentleman of the parish of St Stephen's Walbrook There in the registry he wrote his name—"Gillis van Brug Churtwarden", and there he was buried on the 21st of June, 1646, in the tomb in the north aisle that he had bought for an English posterity

From brief entries in a register, which are all the immortality achieved by the greater part of mankind, we learn that his wife was called Mary and that Giles was born in 1631 There was an elder brother, William, and later there were James and John, who were twins All of them were brought up to be merchants, and seem to have found their origin something of a disadvantage at first, for the twins complained to the King that "some, out of spight, goe about to hinder their trading, in regard their father was an alien " Nevertheless, Giles made a very good marriage About 1659, when he was twenty-eight or so, he married Elizabeth Barker, a widow rather older than himself, with a little girl She was the youngest daughter of Sir Dudley Carleton, of Imber Court, in Surrey, and one of her sisters had already married his elder brother, William Her father

was the nephew and heir of the great Viscount Dorchester, reputed by some to have been the cleverest diplomat in Europe

On that January day in 1664, a son and heir had been restored to Elizabeth and Giles. As he lay there, gazing at the light on a low ceiling, London came into his sixty-two years of awareness as a pattern of meaningless sound. Somewhere beyond that rumour of wheels and hooves and voices, a burglar was waiting to be hanged, and Mr Pepys had sent his wife to secure a view at a window. Not far off King Charles was changing mistresses, "that easy monarch" who, in Colley Cibber's words, "loved his roses without thorns, nor do we hear that he much chose to be himself the first gatherer of them." Three days after the christening, Drury Lane was full of coaches for a new play, *The Indian Queen* by Dryden, who would one day be calling the new-born infant "my good friend Mr Vanbrook."¹

But of that London in which something of the care-free spirit of Restoration remained, John Vanbrugh can have remembered nothing, for soon the family left it, never to return. In January, 1665, a daughter Elizabeth was born. In April, it was heard that the Dutch Plague was in the Thames estuary, and in June a doctor brought it into the City. There was a heat wave and it spread through the human ant-hill with appalling speed. A hundred died in one week, two hundred in the next, soon seven hundred, and then the general exodus began. All who could afford it piled their belongings in carts, and the roads out of London carried away a continual stream of upper- and middle-class families. Only

¹ The foreign name lent itself to a variety of spellings, and he occasionally spelt it Vanbrook himself. The pronunciation no doubt was always "Vanbrook" or "Vanbroog."

the poor remained behind, and in the middle of August, the hot weather never abating, ten thousand of them died in a week, while religious maniacs, the fungus on all human catastrophe, shouted of Babylon and Sodom at the street corners

It may be hazarded that the Vanbrughs left London in June during the panic. For two years we lose sight of them altogether, and then in 1667 they reappear at Chester, where the register of Holy Trinity Church records the death of a son, Carleton, on the 13th of October. It is clear that they did not proceed there at once, for Carleton's baptism is not recorded, nor Anna Maria's, who had also been born in the interval. Elizabeth Vanbrugh had embarked on a high rate of production and maintained it for twenty-one years, during which she gave birth to no less than nineteen children.¹

Giles Vanbrugh set up as a sugar baker in the parish of Holy Trinity, and according to tradition lived in a large building in Weaver Lane known as the Sugar House, for it also contained his refinery. Before Liverpool eclipsed it, Chester was the most important harbour north of Bristol, trading directly with Ireland and the plantations of the New World. Giles was soon accepted as a good and useful citizen, and we are given a glimpse of him in Tong's life of the Dissenter, Matthew Henry, written in 1716. "Chester," he says, "was then very happy in several worthy Gentlemen that had their Habitations there, they were not altogether Strangers to Mr Henry before he came to live among them, but now

¹ Giles, Dorothy, Lucy, John, Elizabeth, Anna Maria, Carleton, Mary, Victoria, Elizabeth, Robina, Carleton, a boy, Giles, Catherine, Dudley, Kendrick, Charles, Philip. Thirteen were still alive in 1683, when Giles Vanbrugh made his will. *La nature de l'air qu'ils respirent, humide et tempéré, fait que leurs femmes sont fécondes — Les Délices de la Grand' Bretagne, 1711*

they came to be his very intimate Acquaintance Some of these, as Alderman Mainwaring and Mr Vanbrugh, were in Communion with the Church of England, but they heard Mr Henry on the Week-day Lectures, and always treated him with great and sincere Respect " This respect was returned by many of the chapel-goers, like Kemick, after whom the Vanbrughs' seventeenth child appears to have been named, and Greg, "a man of excellent sweet temper, and great usefulness " Matthew Henry lived quite close to the Sugar House, and equally near was the little chapel in which, hour after hour of every Thursday afternoon, he expounded his grey religion to the unrejoicing faces

Low church, respectable, and a lover of English liberty, Giles Vanbrugh was by nature a tolerant man But when he remembered the history of his father's people he became a bigot, with a fantastic plan of revenge And when he heard of the grisly Popish plot discovered by the worthy Titus Oates he determined at last to unfold his plan to that staunch Protestant, the Bishop of London

The Horrid Plott Lately discovered against his Majesty, the Kingdome, and the Protestant Religion, and certainly knowne to have been hatch'd at Rome, and chiefly further'd by the Pope himself, has renewed in my thoughts, what I have often wish'd and Judg'd easily feasible But I doubted ye proposition would have been reiected and thought a little dishonourable to attaque a prince in his owne Dominions without a just pretence or provocation

It is, in short, my Lord, ye assaulting the City of Rome on that side where ye Vatican Palace stands, and bringing away the Library

This remarkable project Giles Vanbrugh had pondered in every detail During three years of travel in France and Italy for "pleasure and improvement," he had spent a year in Rome, behaving, it seems, like a government

spy He knew the size of the population and how many non-combatants it included in nuns and priests, "of which I had a list for ye 10 preceeding years " He knew that the garrison in the Castle of St Angelo was small, and that Rome was only five hours' march from the sea—the whole enterprise, he thought, might be over in twenty-four hours Sir John Nasborough was already cruising in the Mediterranean unsuspected,

so that a Competent number might quickly bee landed, and without opposition, and come upon the Citty in ye suddainest manner Imaginable I could believe, if Sir John could spare four thousand briske active men, well arm'd and provided with scaling Ladders and other Instruments, and Bombes especially, to fire ye Citty in severall places at ye same time, it might accomplish ye Businesse

But as "Secrecy is the main hinge of this Exployt," great care must be taken not to include among the troops a single Roman Catholic, who might gallop ahead and betray the design "If it succeed, yr Lordship well knowes ye great valew of those ancient Manuscripts (wch thy have Rob'd ye Prince Palatine's Library and many others of) and of what benefit they would bee, towards defending ours and Impugning their owne Religion "

But that was not all he suggested

If another as great affront might be propos'd and approv'd of, it were no Difficult Matter, at the same time, to send 8 or 10 fire-gatts into ye Adriatick Sea to Ancona, and there Land and March to Loretto and by Surprise take and Raze that neast of Superstition and bring away all its Treasure which some madd fellows as were at Mons would make no great bones of

After all, why not do a thing thoroughly when you are about it?

And Giles Vanbrugh really believed that Charles II, of all kings, would approve of his design "I must confesse, till I know his Majesty is made acquainted with it, and disallows it, I cannot but think it is an honourable & hopeful Attempt, and that wherein, upon his Majesty's Command, I would venture my life, and further with my best advice and fortune " But months passed and King Charles never sent for that advice, nor did he ever wake him from a staring day-dream under Matthew Henry's pulpit, to run through Roman streets with the Codex Vaticanus under his arm

It was in a very Protestant atmosphere that John Vanbrugh grew up, and it may have been a superfluity of sermons in extreme youth that gave him his lifelong contempt for the Church Yet his father was a travelled man, more experienced than most of his provincial friends, and his mother no doubt a cultivated woman Life at the Sugar House was not entirely collect and catechism, and Chester offered a variety of entertainments within the closed circle of its medieval wall Being the port for Ireland, it was relatively far more important than to-day, and the continual flow of men and news in either direction kept it in touch with London It was the military as well as the spiritual centre of the north-west, so that kings and would-be kings considered its support worth having Monmouth entertained the mob in 1683 until they ran wild and stormed the Cathedral James, in 1687, tried to win support for the repeal of the Test Act, and "closetted several gentlemen of the city," including Matthew Henry, but with little result And in 1688 a regiment of Roman Catholics under Lord Molyneux marched in amid tense excitement on the eve of the Revolution

Chester was well aware of its strategic importance, and every Christmas Eve the Mayor and Aldermen in their scarlet robes proceeded by torchlight to the City Hall, accompanied by the local gentry, and read the roll-call of the watch that must guard the city until dawn. Then after a prodigious feast, the company dispersed to their homes and various gentlemen to the walls, and the symbolic custom was repeated for three nights. Beside this annual ceremony, which Giles Vanbrugh must have taken part in, any day of national or local rejoicing would be marked with a holiday and a display of a more frivolous kind. Once a man climbed up St. Peter's spire, fixed St. George's flag to the weather vane, beat a drum, fired a pistol, flourished a sword, and then "stood upon his hands with his feet in the Ayre, very dangerously and wonderfully to the view of the beholders, with casting Fire-workes very delightful." There were, of course, less fugitive entertainments, and a former Lord Derby had built "a fair cockpitt under St. John's in a garden by the water side, to which resorted Gent of all parts, and great cocking was used a long while."

There is a tradition that John and his brothers were given a liberal education at the King's School, of which in the next century a Robert Vanbrugh was headmaster, and though this cannot be verified, it is likely enough, for the old grammar school of the city was the only establishment of the kind. Though it was considerably rebuilt in the eighteenth century, its charming courtyard abuts on the precincts of the fine cathedral that Vanbrugh knew, and it may be said that Chester provided favourable surroundings for the youth of an architect. It possessed some fine new classical buildings in the mid-century style, and its celebrated "Rows" were then far

more complete, so that one could pass from almost any quarter of the town to the next, along picturesque colonnades at first-floor level, without descending into the roadway

To suggest that Vanbrugh had architectural ambition at an early age is more than we have warrant for, but it is certain that Chester introduced him to a style of building that had immense influence on his own. He was brought up in a medieval city, and just south of Weaver Lane was the Castle, one of the important strongholds of the coast. Close beneath the wall on that southern side ran the River Dee, crossed farther up by a long medieval bridge with towers at each end. Westward on clear days there was a magnificent view of the Welsh mountains, ranged about the highest peak of Moel Famau. I believe that his love of the picturesque and the medieval in architecture began in a city of towers with a river at its foot, ringed in a pink wall of Roman origin, and backed by the blue wall of Wales.

Unfortunately we know nothing at all of the early part of his life. It is said that he went to France for three years at the age of nineteen to be trained as an architect, but this is on the whole unlikely, for there were plenty of openings in that profession for a young man of talent, and on the 30th of January, 1686, he received a commission in the Earl of Huntingdon's regiment of foot. Soldiering was the last resort of the young gentleman of undecided mind, but at least it shows that he had too much spirit to enter the family business and bake sugar for the rest of his days. If that was a disappointment to Giles, it may be that Elizabeth was more ambitious for her son. He was as much a Carleton as a van Brugg, and there was something in his veins that mingled

strangely with the plodding virtue of a Lowland ancestry—something which may have seemed no more than a venturesome spirit at that time. But to help garrison Guernsey was the wrong kind of adventure, and when that awful fate overhung his regiment, he resigned. Then in July, 1689, Giles Vanbrugh died and was buried, not in the family vault in St. Stephen's Walbrook but in his parish church of Holy Trinity. By his will the estate was divided into fourteen parts, of which John received two, and the other children one each.

With this small inheritance Vanbrugh found himself in London at the age of twenty-six, as vague about the future as many another young gentleman. But if he had not made a career, he was making some useful friends among the rich, and within a few months he "began his days," as he himself put it, in a very original way. England and France were at war, and in the summer of 1690 he was arrested at Calais "on the information of a Paris woman that he was leaving without a passport after the declaration of war, and it appears that he had introduced this woman to an English lord who is deeply concerned for the restoration of his liberty." That was what the Marquis de Barbezieux wrote to King Louis' minister, Pontchartrain.

According to Voltaire, Vanbrugh professed to be ignorant of the cause of his arrest, but I think this letter explains his reserve on that point. There is also a quite credible story that he was caught studying the fortifications of Calais, and history affords a curious parallel to that. For the painter Hogarth was arrested in 1745 while sketching the English coat-of-arms above the Calais gate. He was released in a few days, after he had proved that he was no spy, but the incident angered

him and he avenged himself with a cynical picture of the gateway Vanbrugh, on the other hand, remained in French prisons for eighteen months and never lost his love of France, never once attacked the nation that had persecuted him, and this seemed to Voltaire a singular evidence of character

Probably he was not greatly worried at first, for he knew that his milord and other influential friends would try to have him quickly exchanged for some prisoner of war in England. But he soon found he must suffer for his very innocence. Whitehall had a French agent whom they were willing to exchange for an English one, but not for a young man of no importance travelling in France for his amusement. The French piece was too good to be thrown away on a pawn, and instead was clapped into Newgate. As a result, the governor of Calais was told to guard Vanbrugh *plus étroitement*. But he was a kind-hearted man, and judging him correctly after a six months' acquaintanceship, he allowed him "to walk about Calais for three days." This incurred the disapproval of Versailles. *C'est un Anglais dans la parole duquel il ne faut pas prendre une confiance si entière*. Nevertheless, *Le Roi m'a donné ordre de vous écrire de le bien traiter*.

After nine months or so, Vanbrugh's health began to suffer and he asked to be transferred at his own expense to Vincennes, on the outskirts of Paris, where he probably had other reasons for wishing to be. And this was done at the beginning of May, 1691, with elaborate precautions to see that he did not escape. In October he was allowed to walk in the courtyard, a French friend giving a security of 10,000 francs. This was a great boon, yet a few days later he wrote to his mother, complaining

of ill-usage and a hopeless outlook The French authorities stopped the letter, fearing that it would injure their countryman in Newgate, whereupon Vanbrugh began to complain to the King himself—that he was deprived of a fire, and other necessities “The King receives fresh complaints every day from Vanbrugh,” wrote Pontchartrain “H M desires you to provide what he needs and to treat him well, so that he may no longer be importuned ”

A second winter had descended on a very bored young man, when in 1692 Louis ordered him to be transferred to the most famous of all French prisons On the 11th of February, Narcissus Luttrell wrote in his diary, “Last letters from France say, 3 English gentlemen, Mr Vanbrook, Mr Goddard, and Mr North, were clapt up in the Bastile, suspected to be spyes ” A month later came the retaliation “French merchants were the other day sent to the Tower, to be used as Mr North and Mr Vanbroke are, in the Bastile ” Montagu North was a merchant who talked too much about Turkey and so had been “clapt up at Thoulon on suspicion of goeing King William’s agent to Constantinople ” His brother, Sir Dudley North, a big man in the City and a former Lord Mayor, was vainly trying to have both him and Vanbrugh exchanged for the French agent Bertelier Meanwhile Montagu’s business had gone entirely to pieces Not so his health, however; for “living so long in an excellent Air with an exquisite Diet, full, but temperate, from a very Crasy he became a very Athle-tick and Sound Gentleman ”

Vanbrugh was placed in the fourth chamber of the Tower of Liberty, a thing it also denied to *MM de Poncet de Sainte-praye et Saint Georges, etc* The Bastille

was an oblong fortress like a grain elevator, seventy feet high, and with eight round towers. It had been built to defend Paris against invasion and was thought to be quite impregnable. In the towers there was room for thirty-two prisoners, and in the whole castle for about a hundred. Yet it seldom contained more than fifty, and at the storming in 1789 only seven were found, of whom three were half-wits. To their bitter disappointment the mob looked in vain for skeletons and instruments of torture.

The Bastille has acquired a grisly reputation, yet the ordinary prisoner was treated no worse than at other gaols and, indeed, rather better than at Newgate. Nor did the scribbling of a *lettre de cachet* leave him to the mercy of the governor, for the castle was under the control of a minister—at this time Pontchartrain—who received a report every day and took care that the rules were carried out. The new prisoner was always brought in by coach, to spare him the scrutiny of the crowd, and a special bell was rung which filled everyone with excitement, down to the poorest cut-throat. The governor received him and asked him to empty his pockets on to a table, after which an inventory was made, and his watch, seals, knives, etc., were placed in a numbered locker. On release they would be restored to him, when he had signed a receipt which was also a declaration of love and gratitude to the monarch who had generously entertained him.

The tower rooms were reserved for prisoners of the better sort, being large and fairly comfortable, though dark. Unless they could afford a private servant, the turnkey looked after them, lit the fire, and brought them food three times a day. And often the food was

extraordinarily good Dinner might consist of soup, fish, entrée, a sweet, and dessert, with a couple of bottles of Burgundy to wash it down, and another to drink during the day Renneville, who was anything but a lover of the place, declares that he was once given six bottles of champagne At last the prisoners begged to be fed more simply and to share the savings with the governor! This was thought to be an excellent idea, and some of them are said to have gone out of the Bastille richer than they went in

Before Vanbrugh arrived, Pontchartrain told the governor, "H M directs you to allow him to walk about and to see the persons who visit him, wishing him to enjoy every liberty that is compatible with his safe keeping " This meant that he could call on Mr North and Mr Goddard, smoke, play cards and chess, borrow books from the library, keep a dog and a cat, if he liked, and even, it appears, a tame bird Undoubtedly friends, including the milord in question, had been at work to obtain these privileges, and among "the persons who visit him" there must have been some with influence at Versailles They came to see, in the Tower of Liberty, a good-looking and extremely amusing young Englishman of twenty-eight who spoke their language fluently, had a compelling charm, and supported his imprisonment well, with an occasional hearty grumble

But visitors could only help him through a small part of the day, and to ease the long hours of candlelight, when there was nothing to listen to but the striking of the clock, the scroop of an iron door, and the shout of a distant sentry, he asked the minister to allow him writing materials It may have been a decisive act in his career. For having seen and read, no doubt, innumerable

comedies both in London and Paris, he decided to try his hand at writing one, and found that character and dialogue came to him with extraordinary ease. And as he wrote, the spirit of the Bastille, was entering deep in his imagination, giving him an intimacy with the medieval in stone that not even Chester could give, forming him for a second and even more important career. But suddenly the rough draft of that comedy was bundled away, for at eleven o'clock on the 22nd of November, 1692, the Abbé de Lagny, *fermier général*, brought an order giving him complete freedom in Paris, the Abbé himself having provided a security of 1,000 pistoles in case he should escape. And Vanbrugh left at once in the governor's carriage to visit and thank his benefactor.

But to damp his spirits the news may just have arrived that his younger brother, Dudley, was in serious trouble. That very day Luttrell was recording in his diary, "Ostend letters say, collonel Beveredge of the Scotts regiment being at dinner with captain Vanbrook, words arose and swords were after drawn, and the collonel was killed, having given abusive language to the captain first and shook him." Beveredge was universally hated, and his pursuit of this boy of fifteen was not above suspicion. Dudley swore that he killed him in self defence, and his comrades testified at the court-martial that he was "always of a peaceable quiet temper." So he was acquitted.

Vanbrugh must have returned to England almost at once, a free man, if it is true that he was auditor for the southern division of the Duchy of Lancaster by the end of the year. But it seems that he really returned to the old, impoverished, knock-about existence of a soldier,

and at one time went to sea as a marine, for Lord Berkeley told the Admiralty, "I never preferred any officer upon My Lord Carmarthen's recommendation, but I promised him to make one Mr Vanbrook, a gentleman with him at sea last year, a captain in my regiment " He kept his promise, and on the last day of 1695, Vanbrugh resigned an eight-day-old lieutenant's commission in another regiment to become a captain of marines at £180 a year There is no reason to suppose that he ever saw active service, but both his writings and his buildings are full of military allusions, and he always remained something of a soldier at heart This gave him a special idolatry for the Duke of Marlborough and helped to determine the shape of Blenheim Palace For just as he loved to write metaphors of storming castles and defending breaches, so did he love to build bastions and towers, trophies and stone bombs

Some time before this appointment, according to Cibber, "when he was but an ensign, and had a heart above his income, he happen'd somewhere, at his winter quarters, upon a very slender acquaintance with Sir Thomas Skipwith, to receive a particular obligation from him, which he had not forgot " Skipwith was one of the Patentees of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, and though kind-hearted enough, was a vain and feckless creature who left the management of his theatre almost entirely to the other Patentee, Christopher Rich. Now it was not as if Rich had any particular love of the stage, though he seems to have been rather fond of Wren's building itself, for he spent most of his time there fitting it up with rows of curious little cupboards and other contraptions for which the actors could never discover any use. Yet he was happy, because he had no

rival The King's and the Duke's Companies had been united in 1682, there was only one theatre, and he ran it. And so when utter mismanagement began to reduce the profits, he thought of an admirable way of reducing the costs. He would take all the big parts from the old actors for a time, and give them, at half salaries, to the young. He would take them from Betterton and Mrs Barry and give them to Powell and Mrs Bracegirdle.

But the players did not relish the idea any more than the public, and the lovely Anne Bracegirdle wisely refused to take one of Mrs Barry's parts. Unable to tolerate such government any longer, they appealed to the Lord Chamberlain and the King. A public subscription was raised, and in 1695 the cream of the company, old and young, walked out under Betterton's leadership and set up for themselves in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where a small theatre had been built in an old tennis court. On the 30th of April they opened brilliantly with the first performance of *Love for Love*. A new play by Congreve was in any case an event of the greatest importance in the theatrical world. Moreover, Congreve had become a partner in the concern and promised them all his future comedies. Rich had lost not only the best actors, but the best dramatist, and so, of course, the best audiences too.

The loss was heavy, but it had its advantages. It gave the young and comparatively unknown actors who remained at Drury Lane a grand opportunity to show their worth (and to insist on double salaries). And so it was that one of them, Colley Cibber, who at twenty-five had little reputation as an actor and none as an author, came forward with a comedy of his own, called *Love's Last Shift*. It was put on early in 1696 and was

immediately a success, although Congreve said that "it had only in it a great many things that were *like* wit, that in reality were *not* wit "

Vanbrugh was impressed—by the acting of the young company as a whole, by Cibber in the part of his charming fop, Sir Novelty Fashion, and by the play itself. But he thought it psychologically unsound. A husband who had been unfaithful for eight years, he thought, would probably not remain very long with the wife who had won him back by virtuous example. It occurred to him that a very amusing sequel might be written, quite destroying that happy conclusion, and at once he determined to write it. The success of a man six years younger than himself encouraged him, and his work in the Bastille gave him confidence. If the play were taken, and liked by the public, it would more than free him from a debt that was probably financial, by helping to re-establish the Theatre Royal.

He began to write at top speed, and within a few weeks, at the beginning of April, the MS. was in the hands of the Patentees. They accepted it—but not for that season. For all his dispatch it was too late. And so eight months went by, and it was not until Boxing Day, 1696, that *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger*, was given to the town. Then, coyly advancing to the footlights, came the diminutive figure of Miss Cross, to speak in childish tones the first words of Vanbrugh ever uttered on the stage.

Ladys, this Play in too much haste was writ
To be o'ercharg'd with either Plot or Wit,
'Twas Got, Conceiv'd, and Born in six Weeks space

Most of the play-goers, in that small world of fashion

for which one theatre could cater comfortably, had been to *Love's Last Shift*, so they knew the situation and waited cheerfully for the sequel. Once more Cibber was the fop, Sir Novelty, but in the interval Vanbrugh had raised him to the peerage, and now he drawled and gestured to the boxes as Lord Foppington. By the end of the first act, good judges realised that a new master had come among them. Here was something of a different order from Cibber's work: true wit and no fake. And if that wit was not as brilliant as Congreve's, the fun was more uproarious. It is true that Powell, playing Worthy, "wadled on upon the stage" blind drunk and nearly ravished Mrs. Rogers in the part of Amanda, but that startling emendation of the plot was just averted, and when the curtain fell, "mighty applause" greeted a comedy which "by the mere force of its agreeable wit, ran away with the hearts of its hearers." Vanbrugh knew that he had arrived.

Chapter Two

THE PROVOK'D MORALIST

*Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous,
there shall be no more cakes and ale?*

SIR TOBY BELCH

WHEN Charles II returned to be King, a maypole was set up in the Strand to show that the good old days were back again. But the people did not dance; they had forgotten the way, or they were too shy. That is symbolic of something which had happened to their souls during the ten years of the Commonwealth. Merrie England had died, the age of poetry was over, and the age of prose had begun. It was rather as if the country had recovered from a grave illness to find that its youth had gone. It could laugh and indulge itself again, but the laughter would be cynical and the dissipation sophisticated. That, at least, may be said of the small fashionable world for which Etherege invented an exquisite, mocking, artificial form of entertainment. Congreve and Wycherley brought it to perfection, and the *Comedy of Manners* was old when Vanbrugh added his contribution at the end of the century.

No form of art could possibly be less didactic, yet Vanbrugh could not keep his personality out of *The Relapse*, and it can be viewed as a satire on the beaux of London.

But hush; they'r here already, I'll retire,
And leave 'em to you Ladies to admire.
They'll show you Twenty Thousand Arts and Graces,

They'll entertain you with their soft Grimaces,
Their Snuff-box, aukward Bows—and ugly Faces
In short, they'r after all, so much your Friends,
That lest the Play shou'd fail, the Author ends,
They have resolv'd to make you some amends
Between each Act, (performed by nicest Rules,)
They'll treat you—with an interlude of Fools
Of which, that you may have the deeper Sense,
The Entertainment's—at their own Expense

And of all beaux the eternal king is, of course, Novelty (or Nahvelty as he drawled it), Lord Foppington For besides raising him to the peerage, Vanbrugh had added immensely to his stature as a figure of fun To this affected youth who complained of the churches, "they begin so abominably early, a Man must rise by Candle-light to get dress'd by the Psalm," yet who was still able to find his day "an eternal raund O of Delights," Vanbrugh opposed Worthy, the kind of man whom he called "The Beaux Antipathy, for they agree in nothing but walking upon two Legs" Now Worthy, who puts Virtue in Danger by nearly contriving to seduce Amanda, is not exactly a model human being, but he is a man of sense and honour such as his creator admired and may very well have been In short, Vanbrugh despised affectation He liked masculinity in life as much as in art

Because he lived in the society of which he wrote, and it was said that his plays "seem'd to be no more than his common conversation committed to paper," there was a naturalness in his writing that the players were the first to appreciate No author was easier to get by heart But beyond the exclusive world of the theatre and its devotees, a different opinion of the play was going round Some who had held their peace at previous indecencies

could hardly endure this final blossom of a profligate stage Vanbrugh was really no more indecent than Congreve, Etherege or Wycherley, but it might be fair to describe him as more coarse For he did not merely laugh at the foibles of his characters, he rejoiced in their sensuality And in the middle-class drawing-rooms of the City the army of moral indignation quietly mobilized

Perhaps not so quietly after all, for when the play appeared in print a few weeks later, Vanbrugh treated the enemy to a contemptuous and provocative preface Already it seems a certain violent clergyman was turning darkly in the mould

As for the Saints (your thorough-pac'd ones I mean, with screw'd Faces and wry Mouths) I despair of them, for they are Friends to no body They love nothing, but their Altars and Themselves they have too much Zeal to have any Charity, they make Debauches in Piety, as Sinners do in Wine, and are as quarrelsome in their Religion, as other People are in their Drink so I hope nobody will mind what they say But if any Man (with flat plod Shoocs, a little Band, greazy Hair, and a dirty Face, who is wiser than I, at the expense of being Forty years older) happens to be offended at a story of a Cock and a Bull,¹ and a Priest and a Bull-dog I beg his Pardon with all my heart

One word more about the Bawdy, and I have done I own the first night this thing was acted, some indecencies had like to have happen'd, but 'twas not my Fault

The fine Gentleman of the Play, drinking his Mistress's Health in *Nants* Brandy, from six in the Morning, to the time he waddled on upon the stage in the Evening, had toasted himself up to such a pitch of Vigor, I confess I once gave Amanda for gone, and am since (with all due Respect to Miss Rogers) very sorry she escap'd, for I am confident a certain Lady (let no one take it to herself that is handsome) who highly blames the Play for the barrenness of the conclusion, wou'd then have allowed it, a very natural Close

¹ Bull being the name of the undignified clergyman in *The Relapse*.

Evidently Vanbrugh felt there was nothing to be feared from a few dirty-minded Puritans, and it was not out of deference to them that his next play was quite inoffensive, in the moral sense at least. It was called *Æsop*, and Rich put it on only a week or two after *The Relapse*, so that it must have been written in the previous year. Vanbrugh hardly hoped to repeat his initial triumph with an entertainment that offered none of the essential ingredients of a popular play—

No Hero, no Romance, no Plot, no Show,
No Rape, no Bawdy, no Intrigue, no Beau—

and he was not disappointed when it was coolly received. The wonder is that it was received at all, for *Æsop* is merely a string of episodes illustrating the philosopher's talent for dealing with one kind of man after another. And each episode is wound up with a fable in very indifferent verse, which arrests what little movement there might otherwise have been. The play was Vanbrugh's first translation from the French, and he probably saw the original—Boursault's *Æsop à la Ville*—on some early visit to Paris. His rendering was free, but admirably so, for nearly all the best effects are his own. It amused him to ridicule types that he considered absurd, but the time would come when he would find a certain embarrassment in the pleasant ten minutes he had devoted to the character of a herald.

To repay Sir Thomas and help the Theatre Royal, Vanbrugh forwent his profits in both *The Relapse* and *Æsop*. Whatever the reception of that play by good judges—and it was by no means damned—it could not alter his reputation for charm and brilliance in the circle of very illustrious Whigs who had become his

intimate friends One of them was Charles Montagu, afterwards Earl of Halifax, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, a great administrator and an even greater patron, who, it was said,

claim'd the station
To be Mæccenas to the nation

Swift declared that men of letters received no more from him than "good words and good dinners", yet although that was certainly unjust, Vanbrugh, for one, was never very much in his debt, and to judge from a letter to Jacob Tonson in Amsterdam, was not unduly impressed by him

My Lord Halifax desires you will bespeak him a Set of all kinds of Mathematicall Instruments, of the largest sort in Ivory, but adorn'd as curiously as you please, they being more for lumiture than any use he's like to put 'em to He designs to hang 'em up in his Library He's tould the best in the world we made at Ams He expects they shou'd cost a good deal of money

And perhaps would be disappointed did they not Vanbrugh smiled to think that the best dividers in the world should be required for a trophy on a library wall

But it seems that before *The Relapse* appeared, he had read him "in its looser sheets, by way of family amusement," that sketch for a comedy he had written in the Bastille Later Halifax, who according to Cibber "was a great favourer of Betterton's company," asked him to revise it and give it to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields That was a request hardly to be denied to such a patron and friend, nor was Skipwith in the least offended, as indeed he had no right to be, though he lost, as a consequence, Vanbrugh's dramatic masterpiece

The appearance of *The Provok'd Wife* at the new theatre in May, 1697, was in two ways more important than that of *The Relapse* at the old it was a better play, performed by better players. The incentive to offer it to a company which included Betterton must anyway have been great, and this time Vanbrugh was able to make his revision with the whole cast in view. And once more he gave away his profits of the third and sixth nights, a generous act, for he was by no means rich. As Sir John Brute, a part that was afterwards a favourite of Garrick's too, Betterton was superb. He was a small, stocky man, not good-looking nor elegant, but a very great artist. He seldom made any violent gesture, and preferred a rapt and silent audience to a vociferous one. "He had little Eyes, and a broad Face, a little Pock fretten, a Corpulent Body, and thick Legs, with large Feet. His Voice was low and grumbling, yet he could Time it by an artful Climax which enforc'd universal Attention, even from the Fops and Orange Girls. He was incapable of dancing even in a Country Dance."

Opposite him, in the part of the provoked wife, was Mrs. Barry, who in the far-off days of the Restoration had borne Rochester one daughter, and Etherege another, and broken poor Otway's heart. Something of the fire had passed from her, but not the presence, the wonderful dignity in movement and repose. Lady Brute was probably her greatest part, and she set with Sir John an example of conjugal misery which the theatre strove to live up to for a hundred years, for they presented a picture very dear to the ribald heart of their creator—a gross and repellent husband bored with his wife—a wife debating with her niece whether or not to cuckold him. And the niece, Bellinda, was of course Anne

Bracegirdle, that "desirable brunette" with "black sparkling eyes and a fresh blushy complexion" for whom "it was ever a fashion among the young and gay to have a taste or *tendrie*," but who, to their eternal dejection, never responded. She was chaste, but by no means cold. There are some so refined in spirit that they will walk slowly by a cripple to spare him the pain of comparison, and any day, crossing Clare Market, Anne Bracegirdle would be greeted by the starving poor whom she had helped. It is recorded that "she could not pass the neighbourhood without the thankful acclamation of people of all degrees, so that if any one had affronted her, they would have been in danger of being killed directly." "The Diana of the Stage" had no lovers, but she had a multitude of friends.

In the privacy of their bedrooms, aunt and niece indulged in charming confessions, and it was a favourite trick of Vanbrugh's to set the audience laughing at itself—

Lady Brute Why then I confess, That I love to sit in the Fore-front of a Box. For if one sits behind, there's two Acts gone perhaps, before one's found out. And when I am there, if I perceive the Men whispering and looking upon me, you must know I cannot for my Life forbear thinking they talk to my Advantage. And that sets a Thousand little tickling Vanities on Foot—

Bellinda Just my Case for all the World, but go on.

Lady Brute I watch with Impatience for the next Jest in the Play, that I might laugh and shew my white Teeth. If the Poet has been dull, and the Jest be long a coming, I pretend to whisper one to my Friend, and from thence fall into a little short Discourse, in which I take Occasion to shew my Face in all Humours, Brisk, Pleas'd, Serious, Melancholy, Languishing, Not that what we say to one another causes any of these Alterations. But—

Bellinda Don't trouble your self to explain. For if I'm not mis-

taken, you and I have had some of these necessary Dialogues before now, with the same intention

Lady Brute Why I'll swear, Bellinda, some People do give strange agreeable Ans to their Faces in speaking Tell me true—Did you never practise in the Glass?

Bellinda Why, did you?

Lady Brute Yes, Faith, many a time

Bellinda And I too, I own it Both how to speak my self, and how to look when others speak, But my Glass and I cou'd never yet agree what Face I shou'd make when they come blurt out with a nasty thing in a Play For all the Men presently look upon the Women, that's certain, so laugh we must not, tho' our Stays burst for't, Because that's telling Truth, and owning we understand the Jest And to look serious is so dull, when the whole House is laughing

Lady Brute Besides, that looking serious do's really betray our Knowledge in the Matter, as much as laughing with the Company wou'd do For if we did not understand the thing, we shou'd naturally do like other people

Bellinda For my part I always take that Occasion to blow my nose

Lady Brute You must blow your Nose half off then at some Plays

Whether it is safe to attribute to a dramatist any of the opinions actually expressed in his work is doubtful When people use the phrase "as Shakespeare said" they nearly always mean, as he made one of his worthier characters say Shakespeare was not Polonius, and we must not make Vanbrugh Constant Nevertheless, the contrast between the "Man of real Worth" and the fool is maintained in all his first three plays, and the former's views on love and morals are often shrewd, and may well have been his own "Virtue consists," he makes Constant say, "in Goodness, Honour, Gratitude, Sincerity and Pity, and not in peevish, snarling, strait-laced Chastity" It was a definition that he himself might have given the Kit-Cat Club

According to Charles James Fox, *The Provok'd Wife* proved its author to be "almost as great a genius as ever lived", while according to Dr Blair its obscenities "ought to explode it out of all reputable society,"—judgments equally absurd. But without doubt Vanbrugh's plays were not for queasy stomachs, his humour was broad like his keystones, though not so heavy. "Why don't some Reformer or other beat the Poet for't?" asked Bellinda, and soon enough one did.

For the denying spirit is always latent in English blood, a rash that breaks out at fairly regular intervals. It is given different names at different periods, but its permanent home is in the middle classes. It was the middle-class citizens of London in Shakespcare's time who prohibited theatres in the City and compelled playgoers to cross the river to the Swan and the Globe in Southwark. It was their great-grandchildren in Vanbrugh's time who attacked Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields.

It must be admitted that the Restoration dramatists rather invited attack by writing entirely for one class. To the "quality," the middle classes were merely funny, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that if a citizen appeared in the *Dramatis Personæ*, before Act III he would be robbed in his shop and cuckolded at home. So the good matrons of the City had more than one reason for not allowing their daughters to blush and giggle at the frank amusements of the great. There had, in fact, been widespread indignation against the theatre for some time, which its latest fruits, the work of Captain Vanbrugh, merely served to intensify. The scribbling poet Sir Richard Blackmore had been among the first to give it voice, with charges of "obscene and profane

pollutions" from which he curiously exempted Congreve, thereby destroying his case. Then there was George Merriton, another poet of a sort, with *Immorality, Debauchery and Profaneness Expos'd*. But these were the merest catherine-wheels, revolving in a tedious blur of words, to the rocket that went up in 1698, when Jeremy Collier published *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*.

Jeremy Collier was a non-juring clergyman, and an example of that curious and undesirable type, the high-church Puritan. He was a born rebel, and a double portion of the denying spirit had descended on his tough and cantankerous head, from Stubbes and Prynne, the flayers of the Tudor and Stuart theatre. Some years before, he had been living on Romney Marsh with another non-juror, and had been arrested, probably without sufficient reason, on a charge of communicating with the exiled James Collier. Collier thought that to accept bail would be as much as acknowledging the usurper's authority, so he decided to go to prison. He was a courageous man, and the incident was typical. But recently his courage had involved him in a more serious undertaking. In 1696 two Jacobites, Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkins, were condemned to death for plotting to assassinate the King. Three non-juring clergymen, Cook, Snatt and Collier, rode with them to Tyburn, and, mounting the scaffold, absolved and blessed them in full view of the hostile crowd. This was very scandalous, for Friend and Perkins had made no public repentance for their attempted crime, and Cook and Snatt were at once thrown into Newgate. Collier went into hiding and was outlawed, and a technical outlaw he remained for the rest of his life.

Now to suffer for the cause may be a reward in itself to some people, but the pleasures of martyrdom began to wane when time passed and the world entirely forgot about Jeremy Collier in his hiding-place. It seemed that to win and hold its attention something bigger was required.

Yet there is no doubt that he was genuinely disgusted by the state of the theatre at that time. A virtuous man himself and a good Christian of the narrow, rancorous kind, he saw the stage as an open encouragement to free-love and irreligion. And indeed its frankness would hardly be tolerated even by modern society, particularly with regard to children. The Epilogue to Powell's *Bonducca* had been "Spoken by Miss Denny Chock, But Six Years Old," and had contained the following lines—

When we ask Favours, Naughty Men, from you,
We must be Old enough to grant 'em too
But these weak Eyes, too feeble Charms, 'tis true,
You may look Babies there, but that won't do,
We must be able to make Babies too

"Obscenity in any Company is a rustick, uncreditable Talent," said Collier, "but among Women 'tis particularly rude." He was shocked by feminine behaviour on the stage, but he was more than shocked by the spectacle of a drunken Sir John Brute, disguised as a clergyman and swearing at the astonished watch. It was an affront to his calling. The Cloth had been insulted, and that was the real cause of his attack. Besides, he knew that "when a luscious Song becomes relishing, a Psalm will be a flat Entertainment."

His philippic against the stage was well-timed, for he had the shrewd intelligence of a journalist who under-

stands the fluctuations of public opinion. He attacked all the dramatists together, but chiefly Vanbrugh, who had given the latest and to him the most flagrant offence. Nor was he the kind of man to be intimidated by a rude dismissal of his tribe for having "flat plod Shooes, a little Band, greazy Hair, and a dirty Face." "Because this Author swaggers so much in his Preface, and seems to look big upon his Performance," he announced grimly, "I shall spend a few more thoughts than ordinary upon this Play", and he devoted a whole chapter to *The Relapse* in order to impeach Vanbrugh on three heads: bawdiness, which was just, blasphemy, which was absurd, and dramatic incompetence, which was any way irrelevant, though he scored a few hits among many wild lunges. It was true, for example, that Vanbrugh mixed abominable blank verse with his excellent prose, and "this is just as agreeable as it would be to Ride with one Leg and Walk with the other", and it was true that *The Relapse* was poorly constructed. But even to have proved, as he hardly could, that Vanbrugh wrote bad plays, would not have advanced his argument at all.

On the charge of blasphemy, Jeremy Collier became a little ridiculous, and can have convinced no one with a sense of humour. On one occasion Amanda exclaims, "Good Gods, what slippery stuff are men compos'd of! Sure the Account of their Creation's false, and 'twas the Woman's Rib that they were form'd of"—which illustrates, by the way, Vanbrugh's curious habit of writing unintentional blank verse. This, to Collier, was denying the sacred truths of religion. But, as Vanbrugh remarked, Amanda was no more doing that "than Mr Collier's Wife might be suppos'd to do, if from some Observations upon his Book, she shou'd say, Sure 'tis

a mistake in the New Testament, that the fruits of the Spirit are Modesty, Temperance, Justice, Meekness, Charity, Etc, for my Jeremy is a spiritual Person, yet has not One of these marks about him " Elsewhere Collier seizes a remark of Foppington's on the subject of church "A Man must have very little to do there, that can give an Account of the Sermon " But it was not Vanbrugh's fault that society regarded Sunday church as a purely social event Mr Pepys had behaved at the Abbey remarkably like Lord Foppington at St James's

Did entertain myself with my perspective glass up and down the church, by which I had the great pleasure of seeing and gazing at a great many very fine women, and what with that and sleeping, I passed away the time till sermon was done

Pepys did not consider himself an atheist

Compared with the ponderous and wordy volumes to which the reading public was then accustomed, the *Short View* must have seemed extraordinarily easy reading, and it had an immediate success, the first edition being sold out in a few months Collier was rewarded not only with the gratitude of the large public, whose mouthpiece he had become, but with gifts of money, and finally the usurper William himself, whose cold ungracious mind found no pleasure in the stage, granted the outlaw a *nolle prosequi*, or freedom from further prosecution, a virtual pardon for his unreasonable act

If those in the other camp were at first disposed to ridicule their opponent, it will be seen that they soon had reason to take him more seriously Wycherley, away from London, was infuriated, Congreve chiefly surprised The actors were the most concerned, for it was not so long since a Puritan England had abolished

their form of livelihood altogether Dryden alone was unruffled He was too big a man to be disturbed by the firework of a ranting rumbustical parson, or to protest that he was entirely innocent Repenting of the follies of his youthful pen, he wrote of Collier in the Preface to the *Fables*

In many things he has taxed me justly If he be my enemy, let him triumph, if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance It becomes me not to draw my pen in defence of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one

It may be doubted if Collier could appreciate the graciousness of these words

Wycherley, however, hurried to the breach, so did Dennis, Congreve and Vanbrugh In May, 1698, appeared *A Vindication of the Stage*, a slight, entertaining work that at any rate is usually ascribed to Wycherley But where that author was too superficial to be effective, Dennis was too profound In *The Usefulness of the Stage* he was able on many points to refute Collier's arguments, but not to attract his public An angry Congreve followed with an *Amendment of Mr Collier's false and imperfect Citations* in which he injured himself more than the opponent to whose level he sank Finally, Vanbrugh entered the fray with *A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Profaneness*

As might be expected, he entered with a stout heart and showed himself to be Collier's match at hard-hitting Passage after passage he could vindicate by merely writing them out again for an honest man's fair judgment "I believe," he said, "had the Obscenity he has

routed up here, been buried as deep in his Church-yard, the Yarest Boar in his Parish wou'd hardly have tost up his Snout at it " Nevertheless the pamphlet was of little effect, for it came to this, that he and Collier had fundamentally different notions about art, as those who understand it and those who do not are apt to have. "The business of Plays," said Collier, basing his whole argument on the assertion, "is to recommend Virtue and discountenance Vice " "I have had no other design," said Vanbrugh, speaking of the gentry of London, "than to divert (if possible) some part of their Spleen, in spite of their Wives and their Taxes " And also—

'tis the Intent and Business of the Stage
To copy out the Follies of the Age,
To hold to every Man a Faithful Glass,
And shew him of what Species he's an Ass

Vanbrugh held up his faithful glass and it reflected a silly world of vice, frailty and selfishness He was not encouraging those attributes, for he was not encouraging anything That was his true defence But in the Puritan year of 1698 he dared not make it Instead, he was forced to join battle under enemy conditions, and he met with little success We find him saying, "The Business of Comedy is to shew People what they shou'd do, by representing them upon the Stage, doing what they shou'd not " And again—"if I judge right, what I have done is in general a Discouragement to Vice and Folly, I am sure I intended it, and I hope I have performed it " Whereas, of course, he had intended nothing of the kind, but simply to offer London the wittiest entertainment he could devise

For an obscure clergyman to have won a victory over the most brilliant and celebrated writers of the day was a remarkable feat. The victory was not immediately apparent, but in the end it was fairly complete. It is not too much to describe the publication of the *Short View* as the beginning of that movement towards modesty and purity which reached its climax in the Victorian age and has not entirely been reversed in our own. The desire for such a movement no doubt existed already, but Collier made it articulate. And so he must be ranked with Addison among those who, in the realm of behaviour, helped to kill the age of Baroque and introduce the age of Sentiment.

When that erratic firework had amazed the atmosphere, quite a cluster of sparks blew after it. While Collier returned to the attack with *A Defence of the Short View*, which added little to his argument, a surprising number of reformers suddenly appeared to denounce the theatre with apocalyptic rage. *Hell upon Earth, or the Language of the Playhouse*—by 1706 it had come even to this. Meanwhile deeds had followed words. Within a few weeks of Collier's attack, the magistrates of Middlesex summoned Tonson and Briscoe for printing *The Double Dealer* and *Don Quixote*. Declaring that the theatres were "nurseries of debauchery and blasphemy," they placed informers in them to take note of all that appealed to their delicate noses, and presently twelve actors, including Betterton, Barry and Bracegirdle, were prosecuted "for using indecent expressions in some late plays, particularly *The Provok'd Wife*."

Under a king who admired Collier, the drama was really in some peril, but no Stuart would suffer it to be destroyed again. Queen Anne made her Master of

the Revels sole licenser of public entertainments, thereby giving them an official status. And at the same time she introduced some needed reforms. No member of the public in future was to go behind the scenes or on the stage "either before or during the Acting of Any Play," and women were no longer to wear masks in the auditorium. Thus it was that the reformers' victory was delayed, and perhaps not understood by anyone for years. Vanbrugh himself was incorrigible, and to the last fragment found among his papers, showed that he did not repent of sins that he could not admit. Yet he seems to have been disturbed at the time, for nearly three years elapsed between *The Provok'd Wife* and his fourth play, and in the meantime he had found a profession in which his morals at least, he imagined, would escape suspicion.

Chapter Three

COMPTROLLER OF THE WORKS

*The reign of Queen Anne produced perhaps
the most Singular architect that ever appeared
in any age or country.*

LONDON & WESTMINSTER IMPROVED

Van's genius, without thought or lecture,
Is hugely turn'd to architecture,

wrote Swift, and so it seemed. The transformation was startling. In 1699 Vanbrugh presented designs for Castle Howard in Yorkshire which proved him, in what was apparently a first work, to be an architect of genius. No other Englishman ever made such an entry into the art. We may think of Inigo Jones weaned from the Gothic, or of Wren at a first exercise in Pembroke College Chapel; but Vanbrugh we say, though less than these, was neither nursed nor tutored; he sprang into power like Athene, fully armed with imagination, and so great was the impression he made, that at once a new manner appeared in the chief works of the day.

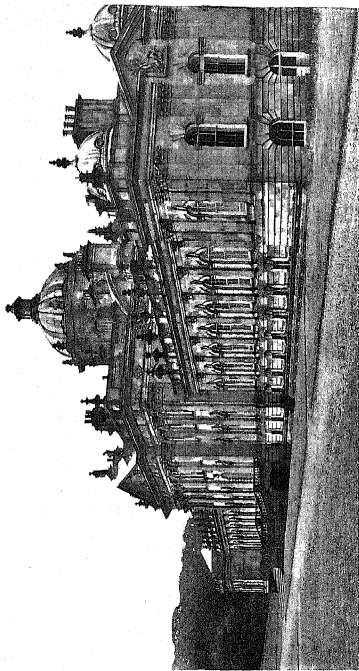
How much "lecture" he had really had we do not know, for the tradition that he was trained in France at an early age is not to be relied on. But it is certain that he did not plunge into architecture without thought, and it may be that France supplied the biggest influence on a young man already interested in the art.¹ The story of the "woman of Paris" suggests that the prisoner of

¹ See footnote on page 105.

war taken there in 1692 was familiar with the city, and I think we may assume that besides going to the plays of Molière and Dancourt, he looked with admiration at certain great buildings of that resplendent reign that were then under construction, or but newly finished, for the sense of design displayed in Castle Howard was not discovered in a moment

There was Versailles, with a unit of design, intended for narrow wings, multiplied over nearly 2,000 feet of frontage That vast monotony will not have impressed him much, he will have been more interested in the Louvre But in the opinion of the editor of the *Wien Society* volumes, his real inspiration came from the Royal Courtyard of Les Invalides by L Bruant, and in its double range of round-arched windows we surely see one source of a theme introduced into every large building he undertook But it would be unwise to think of Les Invalides as the only source, for this theme of round arches flight above flight is typically Roman, appearing for example in the Colosseum, the Theatre of Marcellus, and the Amphitheatre at Nîmes, and, of course, it is also typically Norman Rome and the medieval were the inspirations, and perhaps after all the strongest French influence he felt was that of the Bastille He became obsessed with the fortified air, the martial grandeur "The Bastille" was the name of his own house, and it cannot be stressed too much that he was always a builder of *castles* It seems as if, in some way haunted by the memory of imprisonment, he was for ever trying to escape from those phantom walls by rebuilding them in a happier context

We live in an age of specialisation, and have to remember that there was no gulf fixed between the arts



CASTLE HOWARD, the Garden Front. Sir T. Robinson's wing is shown at the farther end.

and sciences of the Renaissance. It was not the first time that men already established in another career had become architects of renown. Wren and Perrault were the great recent examples. Yet unlike Vanbrugh, it may be said, these men were scientists, and one of them, at any rate, extremely well equipped for the new profession. But then it must be remembered, too, that the age of the amateur had arrived, in which many laymen began to design with charming results, the most notable being perhaps Dean Aldrich of Oxford. If it is argued that Vanbrugh displayed in his first house a power that was genius and a gift for composition that was entirely professional, that is what he had also displayed in his first comedy. It is scholarship and subtlety that are lacking, instead of which we find much ignorance and crudity, and it is chiefly in originality of style that *Castle Howard* may be called a work of genius. The styles of Wren and Vanbrugh indicate very well the routes by which they approached architecture: the one mathematical, the other dramatic.

Success in the theatre had introduced Vanbrugh to a circle of exalted Whigs who had doubtless been aware for some time of his interest in architecture, and who will have admired the splendour of the schemes that he roughed out for them on paper. His sketches in pencil and wash were rapid and effective, impressions rather than portrayals, of some grandeur, some audacity, quite new in English architecture. When these noblemen met, they were able to discuss the works of the day with genuine understanding. St Paul's and Greenwich Hospital, Hampton Court and Kensington, the great scheme for rebuilding Whitehall, and country houses such as Chatsworth and Easton Neston. Many of them

were young men, opulent and ambitious, with a rather superb, rather vulgar thirst for display. Most had travelled on the Continent and seen the new France of the "Roi Soleil," the buildings of J. H. Mansart, and the gardens of Le Nôtre. Some had reached Germany or Italy, and so entered the tropical sunlight of Baroque. Then the exquisite refinement of the new Hampton Court seemed tame to men who had little refinement themselves, its English diffidence of brick and stone, too modest for a class that desired a continental magnificence.

Just such a man was Charles, third Earl of Carlisle, who succeeded his father in 1692, rich, generous and full of ideas. He lost no time in establishing himself in that society in which, though politics were everything, a little graceful poetry and love of the arts were something too. We see him, one of Mackay's characters, "a gentleman of great interest in the country and very zealous for its welfare, hath a fine estate and a very good understanding, with very grand deportment, is of a middle stature and fair complexion." And so, in his good understanding, he determined to replace the untidy castle of Henderskelfe that had come down to him from Belted Will or Bald Willie—the Elizabethan Lord William Howard—with the most fashionable castle that English imagination could conceive, and to embellish the landscape of Yorkshire with statues and domes. He was thirty years old, just five years younger than the architect he selected.

It was some compliment to be chosen with no building record whatever above the established architects of the day. Evidently the dramatist had inspired considerable faith in his ability. The appointment caused a good deal of surprise, for it would have been natural to choose

for such an important undertaking one of the two men who occupied the official thrones of architecture, Sir Christopher Wren or William Talman, respectively His Majesty's Surveyor and Comptroller of Works Strange as it may seem to-day, Wren was not everywhere recognised to be of a different order from Talman, for that age was no better than ours at acknowledging the living master, and Talman was a man of great reputation at the time He was the architect of Chatsworth, which in the opinion of Colin Campbell, the compiler of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, "for the quality of materials, neatness of execution, rich furniture, and all proper decorations, is second to none in the kingdom, and perhaps in Europe " Yet on Christmas Day, 1699, Vanbrugh wrote these words to his friend the Earl of Manchester, at that time Ambassador to France

I have been this Summer at my Ld Carlisle's, and Seen most of the great houses in the North, as Ld Nottings Duke of Leeds, Chattersworth &c I stay'd at Chattersworth four or five days, the Duke being there I shew'd him all my Ld Carlisle's designs, which he said was quite another thing, than what he imagin'd from the Character yr Lordship gave him on't, He absolutely approv'd the whole design, perticularly the low Wings, which he said wou'd have an admirable effect without doors as well as within, being adorn'd with those Ornaments of Pillasters and Urns, wch he never thought of, but concluded 'twas to be a plain low building like an orange house There has been a great many Criticks consulted upon it since, and no objection being made to't, the Stone is raising¹, and the Foundations will be laid in the spring The Modell is preparing in wood, wch when done, is to travel to Kensington where the King's thoughts upon't are to be had

Vanbrugh no doubt had sufficient knowledge to make

¹ That is, from the quarry

his plans and elevations, but not to work them out in detail or to manage the contractors alone, and the man engaged to help him in that was Nicholas Hawksmoor. In reality he was Vanbrugh's senior by three years, but in the profession by twenty, for he had entered Wren's service at eighteen and worked for him at most of the big commissions—the City churches, the palaces and hospitals—while Vanbrugh was idling away his youth in English regiments or French prisons. By the time he became Clerk of the Works at Kensington Palace in 1689, he was the valuable assistant who, with little imagination of his own, had gained from that long and fine tuition a mastery of architectural practice—all the knowledge, in fact, that Vanbrugh required, and was without, in 1699.

One man had the power to effect their union and the generosity to desire it—Sir Christopher Wren, for Hawksmoor would not have undertaken the work if Wren had disapproved. He may have seen that if the born leader and the born disciple could unite, the result would certainly be “an architect” of grand possibilities. Vanbrugh learnt in time to do without his assistant. But Hawksmoor, after twenty years of submission to one genius, was so violently affected by another, that for ever after his own work carried the stamp of both, the new imposed upon the old. As Sir Reginald Blomfield says, he was “incessantly trying to translate Vanbrugh into terms of Wren.” At Easton Neston, for example, his model of 1699 was as much in the earlier style as his house of 1702 was in the later, for in the interval he had been poring over the immense orders of Castle Howard.

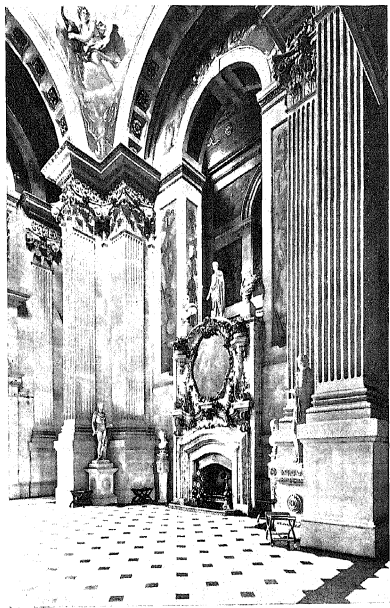
Nevertheless he was far from being a mere subordinate. It was he, as an excellent draughtsman, who turned

Vanbrugh's sketches or rough elevations into working drawings, and it is possible, and even probable, that a great part of the detail was his own "As for the Ornaments on the Top," wrote Vanbrugh, "with the Chimneys on the Main Pile, and the Cupola, I'll get Mr Hawksmoor to Add them there, for I believe you have not the last Designs of 'em " At the same time no technical point could be settled without his advice "Mr Hawksmoor is of my Opinion," Vanbrugh would say, "My Opinion (and Mr Hawksmoor's) is this " And towards the end of 1700, when they were trying to reduce the workmen's estimates, he wrote, "I ask't Mr Hawksmoor alone, what he really thought on't " Then follow Hawksmoor's arguments against driving the men too low "However, I advis'd him to persist in it with 'em, 'till he had privately spoak again wth your Ldship, and known your thought on't " This helps to make Hawksmoor's position clear His word was normally accepted on technical matters, but Vanbrugh was in control Apparently it was not very long since he had been called in, perhaps a year after the designs were approved, for then Vanbrugh wrote of him that "he intended to ask yr Ldship fourty pound a year Sallary & fifty each journey, wch amounts to £100 clear I hope he'll deserve it, and that all will go to yr Ldships satisfaction For I shou'd be very sorry to have meddled in anything shou'd do otherwise "

Operations began in the spring of 1701, but it was five years before the cupola rose above a phalanx of urns and statues to become a landmark in the low Yorkshire hills, and twelve years before the house, still incomplete, was ready to be lived in Had Vanbrugh designed no other, this would prove him a great artist, though it

could not suggest the power and novelty of his later work. The plan was the Palladian one of a central building connected by quadrant colonnades to kitchen and stable blocks on either side of a shallow forecourt. It was not unknown in England, but his treatment was original. In the first place, he used it on a scale without precedent in this country, and, of course, immensity of scale is the obvious characteristic of all his work. Grace and subtlety are totally lacking, and instead, we have a superb feeling for mass and outline, or what is known as "movement." The entire castle was designed, as it were, in two immense crescendos, rolling in through towers and domes to the central cupola. Nothing like this romantic treatment of masses had been seen in England since the Middle Ages, when it was accidental. Inside, the stone hall, 70 feet high, had more in common with St. Paul's than with any other private house, and the same might almost be said of the vistas of stone corridor beyond it. With the designing of Castle Howard, Baroque in England entered its full summer.

But the design was never completely carried out, for after a time, when the centre and all the eastern part had been built, Carlisle and his architects began to devote their whole attention, and the available funds, to such proper embellishments of the park as temples, statues, archways and a bridge. But while the Earl had lost interest in finishing his house, the architects had not, and they continued to remember it with growing anxiety. They might well be anxious, for taste was changing and a ragged edge of stonework is a hostage to fortune. At last, when all three were dead, Sir Thomas Robinson, the son-in-law of Carlisle, completed the house to a different design. He extended the western side several



CASTLE HOWARD, *the Hall. Fireplace and ceiling decorations by Italian artists.*

bays in length beyond the eastern, crowning it with an attic instead of a little dome, and the stable court he omitted altogether. This barbarous treatment can only be explained by the contempt into which all Baroque architects had fallen, including Wren, by the middle of the century. For Robinson was a follower of the strict Palladian school, and he hoped to remodel the house entirely. In the last century an attempt was made to knock his wing into shape, so that the defect is no longer painful, and from a distance hardly perceived.

It was surely from a distance that Vanbrugh wished Castle Howard to be seen for the first time. He designed it for almost every point of the compass and for situations a mile or two away, so that he was forced to conceive his building, as he always would, very much in three dimensions. Consider by way of comparison another great eighteenth century house, Stowe in Buckinghamshire. Robert Adam also designed his garden front for situations a mile or two away, but all on the central line of the vista—there is virtually no other angle of view. Thus it is properly a flat, two-dimensional design, a golden face between the shadow of two woods.

From first to last all Vanbrugh's work was riddled with faults, but this characteristic of Castle Howard explains, though it cannot excuse, a major one: that the cupola is badly related to the building beneath, and in fact is only "good" in the distant views. He could not learn at once to handle his masses with perfect certainty. But from Exclamation Gate, which deserves its name, the beauty of the whole conception might be the startling beauty of a house in dreams. Stone, wood and water unite to compose what Horace Walpole described as "the grandest scene of real magnificence I ever saw."

Now Walpole was usually anything but an admirer of Vanbrugh, so his words have the greater interest "Nobody had informed me," he said, "that I should at one view see a palace, a town, a fortified city, temples on high places, woods worthy of being each a metropolis of the Druids, the noblest lawn in the world fenced by half the horizon, and a mausoleum that would tempt one to be buried alive, in short I have seen gigantic palaces before, but never a sublime one "

It was natural that Carlisle should wish to reward the creator of such a prospect, and this, as it happened, he was in an excellent position to do, being at the time head of the Treasury For immediately under the Treasury was the chief architectural body in the land, Her Majesty's Office of Works And so it was that in June, 1702, Vanbrugh displaced William Talman as Comptroller, at the salary of 8s 8d a day, and knew that his reputation was made

The Office of Works was even then an institution of obscure antiquity, which probably began with the appointment of a Clerk to each of the Royal domains But as early as the reign of Edward I a Surveyor is mentioned, and by the fourteenth century there are also allusions to Comptrollers, Clerks, Master Masons and Master Carpenters—in fact to a complete set of officials In 1390, for example, the Clerk both at Westminster and at St George's Chapel, Windsor, was the versatile poet Chaucer Thus an organisation of a kind had already existed for centuries when Inigo Jones became Surveyor in 1614, to retain the post for thirty years, until the great Rebellion brought all arts to a standstill

When Vanbrugh entered the Office, Wren too had completed thirty years of Surveyorship, under rules

issued in 1662, but in less than three years there was a revision, so I intend to anticipate a little and describe the Office of Works as it existed during the greater part of Vanbrugh's first Comptrollership. It was composed of the following officials: first, the Surveyor and Comptroller, chief architects to the Queen, then, the Master Mason and Master Carpenter, the "Patent Artisans." These were the four important officers, and because they were men with a large private practice all over the country, each was allowed to appoint and pay for a deputy of whom the Treasurer approved. Then there was the Purveyor, who sold off unwanted materials once every year, the Paymaster, six Clerks of the Works, one for each of the Royal Residences, and various minor officials.

Now in the 1705 regulations there is mention for the first time of a "Board," and though some kind of a Board seems to have existed at the beginning of the previous century, if not before, the authorisation of one is rather significant. Hitherto, when the Sovereign wanted a new building, he approached the Surveyor or Comptroller for a design. But in 1705 it was determined that "all Our Services in the said Office shall be done at the Board, by all the four officers, or at least three of them, whereof the Surveyor to be always one." The explanation seems to be that Wren was seventy-three years old, and it was no longer reasonable to expect that he should control all the numerous activities of the Office, large and small. Already he had passed on private commissions to his pupil Hawksmoor—Queen's College and Easton Neston—and more and more he was willing to share the responsibility with his colleagues. This was a very important factor in Vanbrugh's career.

Each week the contractors could come to Scotland Yard and talk over the work in hand with the chief officers. But on the second Tuesday of each month there was a grand meeting, and then the Paymaster and Purveyor attended, and all the Clerks of Works, each bringing the book of his particular Palace, made up for the previous month, but with blanks left for the prices. The Board then proceeded to fill these in "according to contracts, precedents, or the current rate of things of like nature," and afterwards the books were signed. The duty of each Clerk, in fact, was to store the materials, measure new work, make up the books and present a running account of the buildings entrusted to his charge, and each was told that to guard the Queen's property by day and night one trusty labourer must be found, who "shall have his Lodging and a Dogg in ye Store Yard."

To suppose, however, that its whole concern was the building and rebuilding of palaces would be to form a very imperfect notion of the Office of Works. Countless trivial duties required the almost daily attention of the officers, such as the watering and sweeping of Whitehall, the care and alteration of government offices, the fitting up of a temporary stage for an entertainment at St. James's, and then, on the great days of public pageantry—the funeral of Queen Mary, the funeral of King William, the Coronation of Queen Anne—the erection of stands and seats in the Abbey, and of rails and gateways along the route, even the provision of gravel to spread in the streets. One day, Wren was summoned before the House of Lords to explain why the "Scaffels" in Westminster Hall, for the Sacheverell trial, did not allow the Peers to have their usual eight seats a head. Another day, Narcissus Luttrell recorded "Sir Christopher

Wren hath compleated the Itinerant House for his Majestie to carry into Ireland, for him to lye in, in the feild it is to be taken into pieces and carried on two waggons, and may be quickly fixt up " Indeed that ingenious brain was called upon to devise a great many necessary things "Sir Christopher Wren has made this day," said Luttrell, "4 funnels on the top of the House of Commons, to lett out the heat "

But when the Queen told her Surveyor that a new Orangery would be needed at Kensington, or a new suite of rooms at Hampton Court, he at once summoned a meeting of the Board "to prepare and present an Estimate to the Treasury, for their Warrants to authorize the work " Meanwhile somebody in the office began to evolve the elevations and plans Now that would normally be the Surveyor's task, or at times the Comptroller's, but Wren was old, as I have said, and while most things are obscure about that office, this at least is clear, that it enjoyed an extraordinary freedom of functioning Rules might be sternly fixed, but they were lightly treated, sometimes to the point of flagrant abuse, and it seems that the whole hierarchy of the Board was vague For example, the Clerk at Whitehall was more important and better paid than the Clerk at Kensington, but no one has ever heard of the fellow whom Vanbrugh described as "a very poor Wretch," whereas Hawksmoor was a considerable architect who may have designed a good deal of the work himself, particularly at Greenwich, where he was deputy-Surveyor in 1705 And so we arrive at what was essential to the Office of Works at this period collaboration

These words appeared in Pozzo's splendid book, translated into English in 1707

At the Request of the Engraver, We have perus'd this Volume
of PERSPECTIVE, and judge it a Work that deserves Encouragement,
and very proper for Instruction in that Art

Chr Wren,
J Vanbrugh,
N Hawksmoor

There are the three collaborators, the men whom we see to-day as a kind of working unit in the eighteenth century, so that sometimes we are no longer able to pronounce that the author of one building was Wren alone, and of another, Vanbrugh. In the next chapter, an attempt will be made to distinguish the latter's contribution to this partnership, and to estimate his share in developing what has been called the School of Wren. Meanwhile, we have the three architects encouraging in an "Approbation" the art which was so important to their style, and which they all practised extensively—perspective drawing, which forces the designer to see his building as a whole from every angle, a single gesture of design, like a piece of sculpture. "The Architect ought above all Things," said Wren, "to be well skilled in Perspective."

Chapter Four

THE SCHOOL OF WREN

*What I have sent you is Authentic and what is
According to the practice of ye antients
and what is Historicall
and good Architecture
Convenient, Lasting, Decent, and Beautifull.*

HAWKSMOOR TO LORD CARLISLE

WREN was very well satisfied with the change in Comptrollers, for Talman had been a difficult colleague, particularly at Hampton Court. That serene countenance of brick and stone seems to retain no memory of the troubles that attended its birth. In 1689 part of the interior collapsed, killing two workmen and injuring eleven others. The disaster alarmed the King, and an inquiry was held at once. Talman alleged that every pier was "crack't, that one may putt his finger in," and that they were all hollow and cramped with iron. "What was done for greater Caution," replied Wren, "ought not to be maliciously interpreted." After an unseemly altercation he was exonerated, and the work was allowed to proceed. But Talman continued to plot against him, secretly trying to secure commissions for himself, which is a very different thing from collaborating. At another time he accused Wren of breaking a promise to assist his nephew. Wren's quiet justification, preserved among the Treasury papers, contains no counter-accusation of any kind.

The arrival of Vanbrugh brought happier days to the Office of Works, and almost at once a new spirit entered

its architecture Wren's beautiful nature, easy-going to a fault, was quite incapable of jealousy, and there are good reasons to suppose that he had already appreciated the power of the young architect, who was certainly a friend when Hawksmoor was engaged for the working drawings of Castle Howard

One winter afternoon in 1698 a Dutch maid left some linen airing too close to a bedroom fire and Whitehall Palace was reduced to ashes—so inexorable was then the logic of flame. At the first news Wren left home to investigate, but came hurrying back “and in great consternation cry'd out in this manner (*viz*) Wee are all undone, for the fire hath seized the Banqueting House, For God's sake lett all things alone here and try to save that Fabrick” John Evans, whom he addressed, and several others, threw themselves into the task at the risk of their lives and with real heroism saved the building, “though much damnified and shattered” Characteristically, Wren had not spoken of his own admirable work, which was totally destroyed. But it is hard for us to appreciate the unique importance of the Banqueting House in that century. As we drive along Whitehall to-day, Inigo Jones's wonderful fragment of 1619 is easily lost among the squalid immensities of government, constructed in a style just near enough to take the edge off its spring-like beauty, and there must be hundreds of educated people to whom it means no more than a window from which a King stepped out on to a scaffold. But once indeed it was the spring, the first truly classical building in England, and it rose above the low surrounding roofs, more striking and revolutionary than any modern construction of steel and concrete. Later there was a second wonder in London—Inigo

Jones's Portico at St Paul's, and even Frenchmen and Italians were impressed by these. But the Portico was lost in one Fire, and though London was turning classical to the inspiration of Wren, it would have been a disaster if the Banqueting House had been lost in another. The rest of an untidy palace seemed, by comparison, unimportant. Walking next day unhappily among the ruins, the King declared that something fine and regular should arise in place of the old confusion that had gone.

The two magnificent schemes then evolved in Wren's office disappeared about a century ago and were forgotten. It was in 1930 that they reappeared in the Library of All Souls after a great search, and their discovery and publication is the chief triumph of the Wren Society.¹ In both schemes the Banqueting House became the centre of a palace hardly smaller than the Louvre. In the first it was given a portico quite 100 feet high in a single order, and in the second it was doubled, with the portico in between. Now, Jones's final scheme was also very large, and where this differs remarkably from that, is not in extent but in scale. Twenty years before, Wren would have continued Jones's moderate orders here he devised, or sanctioned, a Corinthian order rising through the whole building to a cornice on great modillions. Clearly the inspiration was in part Bernini's Louvre of 1665, those drawings which he had said "I would have given my Skin for, but the old reserv'd Italian gave me but a few Minutes View." These Whitehall fronts, however, are formed by the piling up of masses, they have a new and dramatic quality which we associate, not with the Louvre and Hampton Court, but with Castle Howard and

¹ Vol. VIII

Blenheim At the same time they are rather childish and unsubtle, and were no doubt quickly evolved to impress and encourage King William Although it is too much to suggest that Vanbrugh was actually the author, it may be that he had influenced Wren's office already with a new scale and style of composition It cannot be entirely a coincidence that Whitehall and Castle Howard were designed within a year of each other

Londoners looked for a new and splendid Palace, but unfortunately King William cooled in his desire to rebuild His delight was Hampton Court, and he hated that English custom by which, when the King ate at Whitehall, he must eat in public In July, 1699, Vanbrugh requested and received the royal permission to build himself a small house out of the ruins, using as much of the charred material as he cared Before allowing him to begin Wren asked, a little sadly I imagine, for more precise instructions He was told that the site must not exceed 64 feet every way And so a great palace was shelved, and there rose up in its stead "Goose Pie House "

For one palace destroyed there were three others in the making—Kensington, Hampton Court and St James's The adaptation of Kensington had been stopped in 1694 by Mary's death in the Palace, but Anne continued it, and among the earliest work to which the new Comptroller contributed was the Orangery, for it is quite probable that this celebrated little building is one fruit of the collaboration already described The bold arrangement of rectangles and curves, that feeling both of movement and of solidity, are no less unfamiliar in Wren and familiar in Vanbrugh, than such obvious features as the ringed Doric columns, or the pattern of round-topped niches and doors On the other

hand the grace and variety of the detail and the use of red brick with Portland stone are purely typical of Wren. Vanbrugh by himself was loth to use brick in an important building. It required a greater subtlety than he possessed, to produce a more feminine beauty than he desired. It is unlikely, too, that he alone would have designed the large rectangular windows of the Orangery, they would probably have been round-headed from one end to the other, as in the Orangeries at Blenheim and Seaton Delaval, and as there, the effect would have been monotonous. That is exactly why this gem at Kensington is important, for it shows to what beauty he might have attained had there always been Wren at hand to sweeten and correct his work, instead of Hawksmoor. Queen Anne, according to Defoe, "often was pleased to make the Green House, which is very beautiful, her Summer Supper House."

The characters of Wren and Vanbrugh, and the happy relation that existed between them, could not be better illustrated than by an amusing incident that occurred during the building of the Orangery. Vanbrugh had been shocked to find in the Office of Works a particularly glaring abuse. The Patent Artisans' whole duty was to overlook the workmen employed, and it was laid down in the regulations that no officer should do any of the work himself "on pain of dismissal." So when Vanbrugh found that Benjamin Jackson, the Master Mason, was building the Orangery and being paid for it, he knew that it was his duty as Comptroller to report the matter to the Lord Treasurer Godolphin.

MY LORD,

Before I acquainted yr L'dship this Summer with that shamefull

abuse in the Board of Works, of those very officers doing the Work themselves, who rec'd Sallerys from the Queen to prevent her being imposed on by Others, I made severall attempts upon Sir Chr Wren to perswade him to redress it himself without troubling yr Lordship, putting him in mind, that besides its being utterly against common Sense, it was contrary to an Express Direction to the Board upon the Establishment after the Restoration He always own'd what I urg'd him to was right and often promis'd to join with me in Overruling so bad a practice, but when I press'd him to the Execution, he still evaded it, and that so many times, that at last I saw he never intended it, and so I gave your L'dship the trouble of a Complaint

The truth is that Wren was not deeply moved by abuses He had seen so many workmen discharged and build-ings delayed, from one cause or another, that if the work was done well he was content His chief concern was to employ contractors with enough capital to remain at work when they were unpaid Nevertheless, he heard Vanbrugh politely, and admitted that corruption was wrong and ought not to be countenanced Everyone, he supposed, would agree with that Godolphin did more he sent an order to stop it And so, continued Vanbrugh,

Upon this Order I desir'd Sir Chr there might immediately be another mason got to work at Kensington upon the New Green-house but wou'd recommend none to him, leaving that entirely to himself He at last nam'd One Hill¹, and gave me leave to send for him and give him Directions, which I presently did, and he promis'd me to go to Work But a few days after, finding he had not begun, and enquiring into the reason, I found he had been frighten'd with some hints of what shoud befall him if he durst meddle with the Master Masons business I went to Sir Chr Wren and tould him what had past He said the Man was a Whimsicall

¹ Thomas Hill was one of the two chief contractors employed at Hampton Court

Man, and a piece of an Astrologer, and would venture upon nothing until he had consulted the Starrs, which probably he had not found favourably inclin'd upon this Occasion and therefore had refus'd the work

Vanbrugh expressed the hope that "he would employ Somebody that was less Superstitious" and left London for Castle Howard It was a little exasperating, then, to find on return that Jackson's man was still at work

I was very much surpris'd at this, and went to Sr Chr Wren, but was much more so when he confessed to me that he had allow'd Jackson to go on, only oblig'd him to enter his Bills in Palmers Name I ask'd him if he had forgot your Lordships Letter and all that had past on this Subject He said no, but Jackson wou'd not be quiet without he let him do the Work

Such weakness is charming, and though Vanbrugh did not see it in that light he wished to make one thing clear—

As for Sr Chr Wren I dont in the least believe he has any Interest in his part of it, but yr L'dship will see by this Decisive proof the power these Fellows have over him wch they never made so effectual a use of as when they prevail'd with him (against your L'dships Directions) to let 'em have a Clerk of the Works in Whitehall, whom he himself show'd but a Week before he cou'd put no trust in, one who by nature is a very poor Wretch, and by a many years regular Course of morning Drunkenesses, has made himself a dos'd Sott

And "As for Jackson," said Vanbrugh, really warming to it now (as if the Master Mason were a clergyman)—

I must acquaint your L'dship He is so Villainous a Fellow and so Scandalous in every part of his Character and that in the unanimous opinion of all sorts of People he is known to, that he is indeed a disgrace to the Queen's Service and to everybody that is oblig'd to be concern'd with him

It was typical of the Board of Works that when the storm had blown over, Benjamin Jackson, untouched by the pains of dismissal, continued to be Master Mason for the next fifteen years

Greenwich Hospital may be called the focus of English classical architecture Jones, Webb, Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor made it, together with a number of less celebrated men Here, if anywhere, as Colin Campbell said, "Foreigners may view with Amaze, our Countrymen with Pleasure, and all with Admiration, the Beauty, the Force, the Majesty of a British Pencil!"

On the south bank of the Thames, between the river and the woody slope with its westward view of London, Inigo Jones had planned a Renaissance palace for Charles I But the Civil War destroyed the hopes of king and architect, and all that had been built was the Queen's House, an independent and extremely fine little building that bridged the Dover Road Charles II revived the scheme and employed Webb to carry out one wing of his dead master's design, and then once more it was abandoned, until Mary decided to convert the place into a hospital for old sailors, similar to her father's hospital at Chelsea for old soldiers Wren was among the first to encourage her in this, and when a Royal Commission was appointed in 1694, he offered to become Surveyor free of charge John Evelyn became Treasurer, and in the following May he recommended "Mr Vanbrugh" to be Secretary This, however, was not the architect but his cousin William, yet it certainly suggests that he was connected with the work at an early date

Wren would have liked to conceal the Queen's House

behind a domed central building, for he knew that though beautiful in itself it could make but a trivial climax. But the Queen insisted on being able to walk from her barge to her house by means of a road a hundred feet wide, so arranging the hospital in two halves, he framed that vista with a pair of noble colonnades. "For," he said, "a Portico the longer the more beautiful *in infinitum*. The Eye wandering over the same Members infinitely repeated, and not easily finding the Bounds, makes no Comparison of them with the Height." Above the beginning of those colonnades he intended to raise a pair of modest domes.

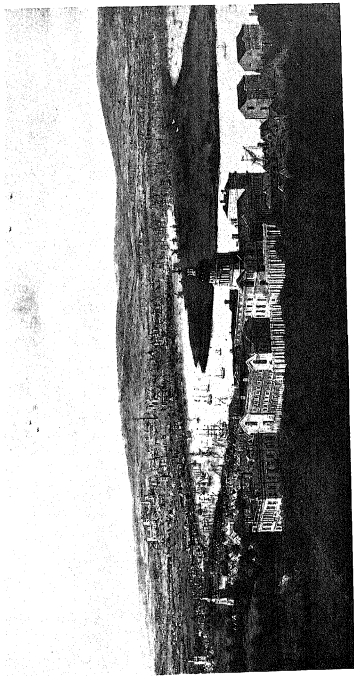
We may say that until 1702 the scheme and its many modifications had been made by him. He had attended almost every meeting of the Fabrick Committee, both at Scotland Yard and at Greenwich in the two rooms fitted up in King Charles's block, overlooking the river and the moving masts. Then in 1703 the Committee was replaced by a Board of Directors of whom Vanbrugh was one. Thereupon Wren's attendances began to diminish. By 1705 they were few, and by 1710 they appear to have ceased altogether. Vanbrugh, on the other hand, was constantly attending till the end of his life, and long before he succeeded Wren in 1716 he had become Surveyor in all but name. As early as 1707, Hawksmoor, being Clerk of the Works, was "ordered to lay the designs for the said finishing before Sir Chr Wren for his consideration thereon."

In 1702 Wren was seventy and, as I have said, he had already begun to make way for younger men, and to correct where once he had designed. About this time the low cupolas he intended for the hospital were lifted up on tall peristyles, to become the striking features that

preside to-day over that arrogant approach to modesty. The effect is very dramatic and not at all typical of his work, and although he seems to have given the design a good deal of attention, it is not too much to suggest that these domes direct us in thought to that other at Castle Howard, their close contemporary.

Through the kindness of Lord Ridley, I am able to reproduce for the first time the centre part of a landscape on copper by the elder Griffier. It is the celebrated view from Greenwich Hill, and the detail is so clear that though undated we know that this interesting picture was painted about the year 1704. In the foreground is the hospital, of which only the western side has yet been built. Webb's block can be seen silhouetted against the river, one of the colonnades without its entablature, and farther to the left the compact shape of the Queen's House. Over all rises the single picturesque cupola, finished before its fellow has been begun. It is designed for the landscape which it adorns, and the foreign seamen glance at it, for the scaffolding has not long been removed and the landmark is new.

In afternoon light we look towards a London more beautiful than will ever be seen again. A century before in this valley, wooden unworthiness surrounded an indifferent Gothic cathedral; a century after, the Industrial Revolution had already begun the laying-on of its dirty hands. Here, the pastoral hills enfold a small and noble city, thronged with classical towers that cluster about the cliff-like sides of the new St. Paul's. North of the River there are marshy fields with windmills, south, a sprinkle of houses that mark the Dover Road, and on the river itself is the shipping of the world. This is the view that delighted Vanbrugh so much that he after-



LANDSCAPE, by Jan Griffier, about the year 1704, showing Greenwich Hospital and, in the distance, St. Paul's Cathedral, both in the course of construction.

wards built his country house close by, and many times he must have stood on the very spot to look down upon Sir Christopher's handiwork and his own

Picked out by the sun in that distant city, the Monument and quite a number of Wren's steeples can be distinguished, and there Jan Griffier has painted the cathedral without a dome. It is difficult to remember that the dome of St Paul's is three years younger than the cupola of Castle Howard, and it may not be generally known that the exact shape was still under discussion in the eighteenth century. Some twenty designs for it have survived from different dates, and in 1702 the public which bought engravings in Paul's Churchyard of the finished cathedral—as we to-day might buy picture postcards of the cathedrals at Liverpool—were given an elevation in which the dome and the towers differed considerably from those which were soon to be built. In view of the collaboration at the Office of Works, the question then naturally arises whether Vanbrugh was in any way connected with St Paul's. There is no reason to suppose that it actually contains any of his work. But in Vol. III of the Wren Society there is a rough sketch for the north-west tower washed in above a carefully ruled drawing of the façade immediately below. The careful drawing is probably by Hawksmoor, and the sketch may well be by Vanbrugh, for the impressionistic technique resembles his, and the proposed tower is typically bold and plain. From a series of drawings, it appears that Wren adopted the proposal and developed it gradually into the rich and extremely Baroque towers that rise above Ludgate Hill.

Until it was carried out, no design prepared in the Office could be called final, least of all at Greenwich

The hospital rose piecemeal and slowly, entablatures were left without cornices, walls pulled down or refaced, stupendous schemes dwindled to nothing, and sometimes humble beginnings had imposing ends. The stupendous schemes were clearly invented by Vanbrugh, and one of the earliest was a design for the west side of the hospital of which only the central feature was carried out. This we know was being built in 1704 when "An estimate of finishing the Shell of the West Wing of King William's Court" was laid before the Directors by Hawksmoor, but in the Griffier that part is unfortunately hidden. By 1708 it was nearly finished, and thus a building formerly assigned to the period of Vanbrugh's Surveyorship is proved by the minutes of the Board to be what it appears, an early work. For the portico is very incongruous and the windows are not as wide as the drums they peep between. On the inner front the scales are even more dyspeptic, and must surely have made the kind Sir Christopher Wren, as he walked through the Hospital after a meeting of the Directors, shudder a little and turn aside into the shadows of the colonnade.¹

But to Vanbrugh's mind the Hospital needed above all things that dominating centre which Queen Mary had denied it, and in the early years of his Comptrollership he amused himself with a scheme that was probably the biggest he ever evolved. At the end of the colonnades he proposed to throw out an immense elliptical courtyard leading to a portico 90 feet high, and so to a chapel with a dome two thirds as big as St. Paul's, yet entirely concealed beneath a strange pyramid.

¹ Another scheme was for a pair of base buildings, quite plain except for a battlemented parapet, and each pierced with well over a hundred uniform round-headed windows. The general appearance is like that of a modern block of workmen's flats.

of arches. As a final gesture, east and west of the chapel there were to be a couple of towers 200 feet high.

It may be asked what kind of fate would have overtaken the Queen's House if this scheme had been adopted, and the answer is, that he would have moved it back a few hundred yards to the top of the hill. The idea could not have been better. It solved every problem of the site. But unfortunately the Office of Works had not the Spanish Indies to draw upon, nor even the wealth of a Bavarian Monastery, and when we have acknowledged the splendour, the doubt may begin to arise whether disabled seamen really require a dome 60 feet in diameter, a portico 130 feet wide, and a pair of towers 200 feet high, for the bearded pensioners at Chelsea manage without them. The scheme was, of course, beyond English possibility. Bernini or Fischer von Erlach might have taken it seriously. Doubtless it was never worked out in much detail, and no elevation is preserved at Sir John Soane's Museum, only a plan and a handful of sketches made with obvious impetuosity.

But Vanbrugh could not easily abandon his theme of a central chapel, and in 1711 he proposed a square building surrounded by colonnades and crowned with a dome. It is seen in the *Vitruvius Britannicus* engraving, published in 1717. But the Hospital was sinking deeper into debt, and in 1721 the Directors decided "that no new works of any kind shall be undertaken after this day."

Such "wilde enormities" have not enhanced the reputation of Vanbrugh. There is a popular notion that he made designs he could never have carried out, that he employed a "ghost" and knew nothing himself of the monotonous reality of architectural practice. On the

contrary, he was a hard-working architect who might attend in a year twenty-five board meetings of one enterprise alone, when he was engaged perhaps in twelve others at the same time,—an architect who was interested in all building matters from the thrust of an arch to saltpetre in stone, and who spent many patient days in the year with Sir Christopher Wren, at Scotland Yard or in his own house in Whitehall, examining and passing the Books of the Works. It is time that we recognised him for a sane and practical person who was clever enough to induce rich men, where he could not induce governments, to be extravagant in stone

Chapter Five

THE CLUB

*When my Head's full of Wine,
I o'erflow with Design,
And know no Penal Laws that can curb me:
Whate'er I devise,
Seems good in my Eyes,
And Religion ne'er dares to disturb me.*

SONG IN *The Provok'd Wife*

“**I**N short, the Kit-Cat wants you much more than you ever can do them. Those who remain in town, are in great desire of waiting on you at Barne-Elmes; not that they have finished their pictures neither; tho’ to excuse them (as well as myself), Sr Godfrey has been most in fault. The fool has got a country house near Hampton Court, and is so busy about fitting it up (to receive nobody), that there is no getting him to work. Carpenter Johns, too, is almost as bad. I went up yesterday under a tylt (as everybody has done that has gone by water these three weeks, for the Devils in the sky): there’s all in disorder still; every room is chips—up to your chin!”

It was midsummer, and Vanbrugh was writing to his friend Jacob Tonson at Amsterdam. He and Congreve and Halifax, cooling themselves by the fountain at Hampton Court one breathless night after dinner, wished the publisher home again, for the Kit-Cat Club, of which he was the founder and secretary, was lost without him. And though the heat made travel un-

comfortable, in Tonson's garden at Barn Elms summer had set up her brilliant fair

There will be a hundred thousand apricocks ripe in ten days, they are now fairer and forwarder than what I saw at the Queen's table at Windsor on Sunday—and such strawberries as were never tasted currants red as blood too, and gooseberrys, peaches, pears, apples, and plumbs, to gripe the guts of a nation

While Tonson lingered abroad, Sir Godfrey Kneller, himself a member of the Club, was supposed to be painting all their portraits to hang in the Club room at Barn Elms, but for the time being he was far too busy employing Vanbrugh to build him Whitton Hall¹ Forty-eight pictures he had to paint altogether, and because the room was too low to accommodate half-lengths conveniently, he invented the canvas 36 inches by 28 inches, which has ever since been known as a "kit-cat" At last, in the room that Vanbrugh had rebuilt for them with "shash" and bull's-eye windows, the young Whigs toasted a different beauty each week, watched by their own bland periwigged counterfeits

According to one tradition, the Kit-Cat Club was formed as far back as 1688 by some "men of wit and pleasure about town," but there is little reason to suppose that it began to meet very much before the new century It is said to have derived its peculiar name from a certain Christopher Cat—Kit Cat for short—a Quaker pastry-cook, who at his tavern in Shire Lane, near Temple Bar, suitably called "The Cat and the Fiddle," disposed of the most delectable mutton pies One day Jacob Tonson discovered those pies, and then, in the words of a scribbling poet,

¹ See Appendix I, p. 297

One night in seven, at this convenient seat
Indulgent Bocaj did the Muses treat

Those forty-eight members included a big majority of Vanbrugh's friends and clients, so it is not an exaggeration to say that the Club was an important feature of his life. If we analyse the list we see that it was composed of the following elements (1) The most intelligent and active Whig Lords, (2) Several foolish and repulsive Whig Lords, (3) The most brilliant Whig writers, (4) Jacob Tonson. Superficially a society for amusement, it was not without a deeper significance. The noblemen enjoyed the company of the writers, the writers enjoyed the patronage of the noblemen, and Tonson "having riggl'd himself into the Company of a parcel of Poetical young Sprigs" had the publication of their serious works and the first refusal of their inexhaustible verse, "the Club being fam'd for the many smart Poems and accurate Productions they had sent into the World "

Jacob Tonson was eight years older than Vanbrugh, with whom he had an intimate and charming correspondence, and possibly the best of his many life-long friends. He had begun bookselling in a very small way as a young man. But publishing Milton and Dryden, Otway and Tate, soon put him on the road to success, and before long he was at the head of his profession. In 1684 he produced *Tonson's Miscellany*, or alternatively *Dryden's Miscellany*, for it was edited by the poet. The success of the first volume led to several others in the '80's, '90's and the first decade of the new century, and it was in the fifth of these that Vanbrugh's one little poem appeared, fashionably cynical like many bad poems to-day.

To a *LADY* More *Cruel* than *Fair*

Why d'ye with such *Disdain* refuse
An humble *Lover's* *Plea*?
Since *Heav'n* denies you *Pow'r* to chuse,
You ought to value me

When thousands with unerring *Eyes*
Your beauty wou'd decry,
What *Graces* did my *Love* devise,
To give their *Truths* the *Lie*

To ev'ry *Grove* I told your *Charms*,
In you my *Heav'n* I plac'd,
Proposing *Pleasures* in your *Arms*,
Which none but I cou'd taste

For me t'admire, at such a rate,
So dam'd a *Face*, will prove
You have as little *Cause* to hate,
As I had *Cause* to *Love*

Being utterly unlike him in character, Dryden was never on very good terms with his publisher Lord Bolingbroke used to say that once when he was with the poet there came a knock on the door—"This is Tonson," said Dryden "You will take care not to depart before he goes away, for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him, and if you leave me unprotected I shall suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue." Dryden was not altogether above rudeness himself. Once in a fit of rage, remembering Tonson's extraordinary appearance—big-eared, fat-chopped, with a stern, rather crooked mouth—he wrote three lines on a sheet of paper

With leering looks, bull-faced and freckled fair,
With two left legs and Judas-coloured hair,
And frowzy pores, that taint the ambient air

Giving them to a messenger—"Tell the dog that he who wrote these can write more," he said But they were quite enough "Upon trial," he declared at another time, "I find all your trade are sharpers, and you no more than others, therefore I have not wholly left you " Few poets address their publishers in this manner to-day

People either loathed or loved Jacob Tonson, for he was not only shrewd and cunning and relentless, he was also a very good friend to a great many people, and grew as success crowned his years to be more and more the "genial Jacob" of Pope's couplet At last, when he was equally old and rich, he became, according to Pope, "the perfect image and likeness of Bayle's Dictionary, so full of matter, secret history and wit and spirit, at almost fourscore " Life made him work hard for success, and he achieved it only by developing an unattractive side of his nature What if he looked like a bookseller among lords, it was said He always behaved like a lord among booksellers

Once for a short while he had even managed to make an enemy of the harmless Congreve, who had never been known to quarrel with anyone before Their reconciliation drew a poem from Nicholas Rowe, that charming forgotten Laureate whose one gift to the language was a name—"Is this that Haughty, Gallant, Gay Lothario?"—but who was once as gay and good-looking himself, when he sat up all night for his pleasure and lay abed all day for his ease The poem was an imitation of the Horace Ode, "Donec gratus eram tibi "

THE RECONCILEMENT BETWEEN JACOB TONSON AND
MR CONGREVE

TONSON

While at my house in Fleet Street once you lay,
How merrily, dear Sir, time pass'd away
While I partook your wine, your wit, and mirth,
I was the happiest creature on God's earth

CONGREVE

While in your early days of reputation,
You for blue garters had not such a passion,
While yet you did not use (as now your trade is)
To drink with noble lords, and toast their ladies,
You, Jacob Tonson, were to my conceiving,
The chearfullest, best, honest fellow living

TONSON

I'm in with captain Vanburgh at the present,
A most *sweet-natur'd* gentleman, and pleasant,
He writes your comedies, draws schemes, and models,
And builds dukes' houses upon very odd hills
For him, so much I dote on him, that I,
If I was sure to go to heaven, would die

CONGREVE

Temple and Delaval are now my party,
Men that are *tam Mercurio* both *quam Marte*,
And though for them I shall scarce go to heaven,
Yet I can drink with them six nights in seven

TONSON

What if from Van's dear arms I should retire,
And once more warm my Bunnians at your fire,
If I to Bow-Street should invite you home,
And set a bed up in my dining-room,
Tell me, dear Mr Congreve, would you come?

GONGREVE

Though the gay sailor, and the gentle knight,
Were ten times more my joy and heart's delight,
Though civil persons they, you ruder were,
And had more humours than a dancing-bear ,
Yet for your sake I'd bid them both adieu,
And live and die, dear Bob, with only you

Meanwhile under the patronage of the Club the reputation of Christopher Cat was growing, and soon his name was heard on the stage, a sure sign of fame, or notoriety. So when he moved to better quarters the Club followed him, to where, at the Fountain tavern in the Strand,

High o'er the gate he hung his waving sign,
A Fountain Red with ever-flowing Wine

Like the Baroque artist he was, Cat offered his famous pies in outlandish and wonderful shapes. "There was not," declared that incorrigible journalist, Ned Ward, "a Mathematical Figure in all Euclid's Elements, but what was presented to the Table in Bak'd Wares, whose Cavities were fill'd in with fine Eatable Varieties, fit for Gods or Poets." Moreover, so many sheets of paper had been covered with squibs, epigrams and eulogies that Cat was robbing neither authors nor posterity when he used them up as a lining to his pies, so that the casual customer might sometimes chew his last mouthful to the regular rhythm of a scorched but still legible heroic verse. Outsiders feared that the meat might never be cooked if it was wrapped in the clay-cold rhymes of some of the members, but at least it could not be denied that verse lined, and underlined, their feasting. "They could scarce demolish the imbellish'd Covering of a Pigeon-Pie without a Distick, or break through the sundry

Tunicks of a Puff-Paste Apple-Tart, without a smart Epigram upon the Glorious Occasion ”

In Summer the “Fountain” became intolerably stuffy, and then the Club would meet in the Upper Flask tavern on “Hampstead’s airy Head,” with the unfinished dome of St Paul’s below, and the cool sweep of the Surrey hills disappearing into twilight Later, when Tonson had returned from Holland, they would drive out of London southwards, to the new room at Barn Elms They were not a political club, but all of them were ardent believers in the Protestant Succession, and nearly all of them ardent Whigs—it could not have been otherwise in an age as political in thought as an earlier had been religious

Ned Ward produced a scurrilous book in 1709 called *The Secret History of Clubs*, which contains the most extraordinary catalogue of societies that can well be imagined The No-Nose, the Scatter-Wit, the Beef-Stake, the Thieves’, the Market-Women’s, the Smoaking, the Lying, the Dancing (or Buttock-Ball in St Giles), the Atheistic, the Surly, the Man-Hunters’—all these he described, with others less mentionable, and Ned Ward was never one to mince words To the Kit-Cat he devoted himself at some length, for even to him it must have seemed a little superior to the rest According to his account a meeting proceeded like this, though it was certainly never his fortune to attend one

When the Pye Feast was over, and they had done commending of the Rose-Water Codlin Tarts for their Helliconian Flavour, it was the Drawers next Business to clear the Board, bring every Man his bottle and a clean Glass, and then the Wits, according to Custom, for the Diversion of the rest, would be so liberal of their Talents, that not a *Roman* Author, or a mouldy Worthy, could rest

in their Graves for two Hours, but must be box'd about the Board, till everyone had run over his whole Catalogue of Dead Bards and Emperours, to Shew his Learning in remote Antiquities The Duke of Marlborough could not be nam'd without a Scipio to confront him, nor Prince Eugene mention'd without a Hannibal to oppose his Character, Ben Jonson, Shackspear or Dryden remember'd without such a contemptible Fish, as if they were only fit to write Stage Speeches for a Mountebanks Orators, or Ballads for Pye Corner

It may be doubted if the conversation was really so highbrow, but at least it cannot often have been dull Besides Congreve and Vanbrugh, the artistic element included Richard Steele, Godfrey Kneller, who was still Gottfried Kniller when he opened his mouth, fastidious Addison, who thought Nick Rowe too frivolous for a sincere friend, and Samuel Garth On the small, topmost shelves in country house libraries, the poetry of Dr Garth sleeps on undisturbed, but in life he was a cheerful fellow, who claimed to be the fattest man in London and once beat the next fattest, the Duke of Grafton, in a race of three hundred yards along the Mall Tonson and Pope agreed that Garth, Congreve and Vanbrugh were "the three most honest-hearted, real good men of the poetical members of the Kit-Cat Club" Garth was certainly more humane in his work than most doctors of the day, and did not confine his sympathy to the rich But his methods were abrupt He would scrawl little notes to Sir Hans Sloane in a hurried untidy hand

DEAR SIR HANS,

If you can recommend this miserable slut to be flux'd you'll do an act of charity for,

dear sir,

your obedt sert

SL GARTH

Nine of his patients, he said, had such good constitutions that nothing would kill them, and the tenth such a bad one that nothing would keep him alive

The titled part of the Club greatly outnumbered the writers, and included in the course of time Halifax and Carlisle, Vanbrugh's earliest patrons. Then there was Viscount Cobham from Stowe, and the Earl of Scarbrough from Lumley, both future clients, and the Duke of Manchester, who at Kimbolton would employ him before either. The future Duke of Newcastle was there, too, a rather worried youth, nicknamed "Permus" at court from a silly habit of introducing all his remarks to the Queen with "*Est-il permus?*" For him Vanbrugh would be working at Claremont in Surrey. Other members were Godolphin, Burlington and the young Robert Walpole. But the greatest of all, as all would have agreed, was John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. His attendances were few, but his absences were in the cause of history.

The claim of Halifax "to be Maecenas to the nation" might well have been challenged by the Earl of Dorset, who as Lord Chamberlain had helped the rebel actors to set up at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and to whom in one way or another Dryden, Prior, Wycherley, Waller and Butler had all been indebted. Typical of the other kind of Whig nobleman in the Club was Mohun, one of the most disreputable men of the age, gross in appearance and dangerous to know. This surrealist in violence jumped out of a window at seventeen to fight a duel, helped to kill the actor Mountfort two days later, and from then on boasted and duelled his way through life to a November dawn in Hyde Park when he and the Duke of Hamilton fought "like enraged Lyons" without attempting to parry, until they both fell, spitted on each

other's swords, and expired With him we may bracket the unappetising Earl of Carbery, who was said to derive his income from selling Welshmen to be slaves in the West Indies

Crudity and brilliance were mixed in the elements of this Club, because they were mixed in the larger society of which it was a microcosm However inferior that ostentatious Whig mentality may seem, to the equally wild but finer Elizabethan mind, its attitude to life was still healthily single—brain was not alien to muscle, nor art to sport The Mohuns and Congreves could meet on easy terms, and the first would talk of poetry and the opera as naturally as the second of a cock-fight or a set-up No longer are sporting clubs in the habit of honouring beautiful women with names engraved on a set of toasting glasses

Of the Kit-Cat toasts, which were as great an institution as the pies, Addison gives a charming account in the twenty-fourth number of the *Tatler*

That happy virgin, who is received and drunk to, has no more to do in this life but to judge and accept of the first good offer The manner of her inauguration is much like that of the choice of a Doge in Venice it is performed by balloting, and when she is so chosen, she reigns indisputably for that ensuing year, but must be elected a-new to prolong her empire a moment beyond it When she is regularly chosen, her name is written with a diamond on a drinking-glass The hieroglyphic of the diamond is to shew her, that her value is imaginary, and that of the glass to acquaint her, that her condition is frail, and depends on the hand that holds her

At that time, it seems, there were two outstanding beauties, whom Addison called "Mrs Gatty and Mrs Frontlet." Being different types, they were excellent friends, for "he that likes Gatty can have no relish for

so solemn a creature as Frontlet, and an admirer of Frontlet will call Gatty a Maypole girl " In short—"the first is an agreeable, the second an awful beauty "

The poetic tributes paid to such heavenly beings, to commemorate the scratching of a diamond on a glass, were by no means to be scribbled by anyone On the contrary, a charming skill was required for these little pieces of verbal marquetry An ordinary example is one in honour of Mrs P Dashwood

Fair as the blushing grape she stands,
Excites our hopes, and tempts our hands,
Blossoms and fruit together meet,
As Autumn ripe, as April sweet

Some of the best are from the hand of Dr Garth, and one on Lady Essex contains a last line as surprising as if a living butterfly were found in a case of pinned specimens

The bravest hero and the brightest dame,
From Belgia's happy clime Britannia drew,
One pregnant cloud we find does often frame
The awful thunder and the gentle dew

In another, Dr Garth made use of professional experience

On Lady Hyde in Childbed

Hyde tho' in agonies, her graces keeps

But I cannot do justice here to so many smart poems and accurate productions, and the reader who enjoys fingering dust for the lost brilliant of a phrase or image is directed to the fifth volume of J Nichols' *Select Collection of Poems* where many are preserved, or to the poetical

works of the various members The toasts became such a feature of the Club that they suggested to Dr Arbuthnot, Garth's Tory rival, another explanation of its name

Whence deathless Kit-Cat took its name
Few critics can unriddle,
Some say from pastry-cook it came
And some from Cat and Fiddle

From no trim beaus its name it boasts,
Gray statesmen or green wits,
But from its pell-mell pack of toasts
Of old Cats and young Kits

I doubt if many old Cats found their names in faint silver around a drinking glass, but quite the youngest of all young Kits was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu Her father, the Duke of Kingston, was very proud of his little daughter who was so quick and so keen to become a classical scholar, at the age of eight So one day he brought her to a meeting, and by universal consent she was acclaimed and elected At the sight of so many large and important smiling men all lifting their glasses to her, she was quite overcome with emotion It was the happiest day of her life

And Jacob Tonson cared for all these things Once squinting Mohun, in a fit of drunken clumsiness, snapped off the carved top of his chair "A man who would do that," muttered Tonson, "would cut a man's throat "

Chapter Six

DRAMATIST AND KING OF ARMS

*Van (for 'tis fit the reader know it)
Is both a Herald and a Poet.*

SWIFT

WITH all allowances made for the demands of a new profession, it is not to be supposed that Vanbrugh would have lapsed into silence after *The Provok'd Wife* if the onslaught of an angry public had not discouraged him. Yet he deserted the drama for nearly three years, and never again offered the stage a complete comedy of his own invention. His fourth was one that a man of fluency could have turned out in a few days. It was an adaptation of *The Pilgrim* of 1621, by Fletcher, and Vanbrugh had merely given it "some light touches of his pen," and reclothed it in modern words to become the first play of the new century; for it was produced at the Theatre Royal at the end of April, 1700. *The Pilgrim* is not among the best of his works, and it is chiefly remarkable for the parts contributed by Dryden. On the 11th of April the aged poet had written to a friend, "Within this moneth there will be play'd, for my profit, an old play of Fletcher's, called the 'Pilgrim,' corrected by my good friend Mr. Vanbrook: and to which I have added a new masque; and am to write a new prologue and epilogue." Dryden was dying, and it would be his last work. For a man sixty-eight years old, and with twenty days to live, the virile verse of that prologue and epilogue was a great achievement.

It will be seen that Vanbrugh had returned to his earlier friends, the young company at Drury Lane, and being able to cast the play as he wished, he first of all read over the MS with Colley Cibber and invited him to choose a part, for ever since *Love's Last Shift* he had admired and liked the young actor Cibber chose nothing grander than the stuttering cook and the mad Englishman, two very unimportant though amusing characters, so Vanbrugh added the epilogue to his share Cibber then called at Gerard Street for the aged poet to hear him and confirm the choice, and Dryden was so much pleased with his delivery that he entrusted him with the prologue as well This compliment flattered Cibber as much as it enraged the rest of the company

For providing the most beautiful part of his good friend's entertainment, Dryden was to receive the profits of the third night But that night was the 1st of May, 1700, and later, when there was darkness again in the little theatre he had so often filled with light, his mind being perfectly at rest, he died Sudden as it was, the death of Dryden moved the educated world It may have been more universally felt than the death of Tennyson, for even men of rank in that age cared for the poets, and Dryden had been for long the first in the land In sorrow and respect Vanbrugh re-wrote the last line of his play

I hope before you go, Sir, you'll share with us an Entertainment
the late great Poet of our Age prepar'd to celebrate this Day Let
the Masque begin

That masque is beautiful, for there went to its making a life-time of experience, and a fancy that could not age It appears to have been put to music by Daniel

Purcell, the son of the great composer who had died in 1695, and to have been written for New Year's Day, 1700, which in the old calendar was the 25th of March, for it might have been called "A Masque of the 17th Century," which it reviewed Diana, Mars and Venus speak in turn for the reign of the hunting King James, the Civil War, and the amorous Restoration, and Chronos, urging the world into a new age, dismisses them with a haunting rhyme—

All, all of a piece throughout,
Thy Chase had a Beast in view,
Thy Wars brought nothing about,
Thy Lovers were all untrue
'Tis well an Old Age is out,
And time to begin a New

It was Dryden's epitaph on the century of strife and beauty that he helped to adorn, and barely outlived

Reborn in the prose of the New Age, *The Pilgrim* had gained brevity and the vigour of Vanbrugh's style, but had lost the lyrical quality of that

very Merry, Dancing, Drinking,
Laughing, Quaffing and unthinking Time,

as Dryden called it For pages together Vanbrugh did little more than copy out Fletcher's "late" and irregular blank verse in the form of prose If he deleted, it was some verbose or sentimental passage, if he added, it was to the enrichment of the comedy—a stammering servant or a scene in a madhouse Nevertheless, in the short journey from verse to prose the beauty was apt to slip out of his careless hand and disappear Alinda had cried to her lover—

Are ye weary of me?
I will hang here eternally, kiss ever,
And weep away for Joy

These words became,

Are ye then weary of me? but you shan't leave me No, I'll hang
here for ever Kiss you eternally, O my dear Pilgrim

But Vanbrugh was not one to bother himself with trifles, nor did he know that in spring-cleaning an old grotto he had swept out Egeria with the dead leaves

The first performances of *The Pilgrim* owed a great deal to Anne Oldfield, a girl of seventeen, unknown to London, who found her first big part as Alinda About a year before, Farquhar, the last recruit to that brilliant company of dramatists, had listened as he sat in the Mitre Tavern in St James's Market to a voice in a room behind the bar, reading Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady* aloud He made some trivial excuse to enter the room, and was as much struck by the girl's appearance as he had been by her intelligent and sympathetic reading Vanbrugh was a frequent visitor to this tavern, and is said to have known her mother, for Anne Oldfield was well-born, but her father had squandered his fortune in the Horse Guards, and so she was living with her aunt who kept the house When Farquhar had introduced him to "the Jewel he had found there by Accident," Vanbrugh, equally impressed, introduced her to Drury Lane But Rich was less kindly and less discerning For a whole year she hung about the theatre "almost a Mute and unheeded," until Vanbrugh himself offered her Alinda Her extreme shyness in the first performance suited the part well

enough and added to her natural charm and ability That might a new star arose who would outshine, in a few years, the radiant Bracegirdle, and drive her from the stage

It is amusing to observe that Vanbrugh was actually bowdlerising Fletcher in this play That was partly inevitable in the polite age of Queen Anne, when the frank thoughts of the Jacobians were enjoyed, but no longer in the same frank words, and it may also have been a tribute to Jeremy Collier Yet when *The False Friend* appeared at Drury Lane two years later, at the beginning of 1702, it was seen that the incorrigible dramatist had returned to his old habits If he was right in declaring that a comedy which contained "No Rape, no Bawdy, no Intrigue, no Beau," could never survive in London, this comedy appeared to be destined for a ripe old age, for it is compact of these things, and offered an attempted rape on a darkened stage In spite of these charms, *The False Friend* was not revived for eight years, and after that, but seldom This was an uncommon fate for one of Vanbrugh's comedies, most of which held the stage for three quarters of a century, being favourites of a society that considered his architecture contemptible "If Vanbrugh had adapted from Vitruvius as well as from Dancourt," Horace Walpole said, "Inigo Jones would not have been the first architect in Britain " The attitude of 1750 to the taste of 1710 was not unlike our own attitude to Edwardian taste So perhaps there is still hope for Sir Aston Webb

The False Friend was a free translation of *Le Traître Pun* of 1700, which was itself a translation by Le Sage from the Spanish of Francisco de Rojas Zorilla There is no reason to suppose that Vanbrugh had any Spanish,

and the Nonesuch editor suggests that Tonson may have brought him the French version from Holland, where it was printed. He followed his usual practice of pruning in one place and grafting in another, nearly always to the improvement of the whole. Yet a comedy which ended with an unwilling bride and a murder was never likely to enjoy a long run.

So much has been said of Vanbrugh the dramatist, architect and "man of pleasure," that the reader may have forgotten Captain Vanbrugh of the marines. Yet he "served till the Regiment was broak" in 1698, and in the last months without pay. In fact he was owed £128 13s 3d, and after four years, decided that it was time for a reckoning to be made. But as a Treasury official endorsed his petition, "Capt Jno Vanbrook, 14th July, 1702. He must apply to ye Collonel," it is doubtful if he then received his due.¹ Shortly afterwards he resigned a new commission in the Earl of Huntingdon's Regiment of Foot, probably on account of his Comptrollership, and with that his career as a soldier came to an end.

Meanwhile Castle Howard had achieved its second year of construction and Hawksmoor arrived "time enough to regulate some errors and difficultys the workmen were going into." It seems that negotiations with the London master-mason, who was probably Strong, the builder of St. Paul's, had broken down, and instead, three men of York were engaged at lower rates, a piece of economy that did not improve the fabric. By the end of 1703, with "near 200 men at Work," much had been built of the east wing which was to contain the private

¹ But Luttrell records that in 1708 Vanbrugh was made a commissioner with Edward Williamson and Gregory King "to state all King William's debts, both civil and military. So he presumably saw to it that his own debt was settled."

apartments of the family, as it does to this day, and Carlisle could also look over "A Note of Mason Worke Don att the Grand Pile Since the Last Measurement" All Vanbrugh's castles were built from east to west, so that they could be occupied before they were finished consequently the western extremities of the grandest designs were never carried out Living in their old castle of Henderskelfe a hundred yards away, the Howards could watch the steady growth of their new one Rising with it, Easton Neston had reached its entablature in 1702 It is curious to reflect that Hawksmoor's pilasters were doing silent homage to another great order, at that time hardly begun

Returning to the stage, we find that Vanbrugh had been at work on something more likely to win approval This time the French play he had chosen to render was not new, but *La Maison de Campagne*, a farce of 1688 by Dancourt, which he may possibly have seen in Paris *The Country House* must have appealed to the architect in him, for it relates the comic misfortunes of a self-made man who was foolish enough to buy one In an age when a portico did for the parvenu whatever it is that a Rolls Royce does to-day, there were many such It was always the pretentious fellow, the fool, that Vanbrugh picked out to ridicule And nobody, we may be sure, associated poor Mr Barnard with the noble owner of new Henderskelfe

It is a great misfortune that none of Vanbrugh's letters to Carlisle between the years 1700 and 1721 have been discovered, for they must inevitably have thrown light on his whole career, and incidentally on the shameful appointment that gave him a fourth profession Carlisle at this time was deputy Earl Marshal of England,

the Duke of Norfolk being both a minor and a Roman Catholic, and he was Vanbrugh's devoted friend. So when the post of Clarenceux King of Arms—the second in the College of Heralds—became vacant, he decided to appoint the architect who had pleased him so well, notwithstanding his total ignorance of heraldry, and the contempt he had shown for it in a recent play. There did not seem to Carlisle to be any disadvantage in that. But unfortunately, though not unnaturally, custom required a King of Arms to be already a herald. It would be necessary to revive an obsolete family appointment, and dub him Carlisle Herald first of all.

This outrageous proposal filled the sober-minded heralds with indignation and alarm. They remembered only too well the offending scene in *Æsop* and the obsequious character of Quaint, and they protested vigorously against the appointment of such a man as the author of these lines to be their second-in-command. Most indignant of all was Gregory King, the elderly Lancaster Herald, who had devoted his whole life to mastering a complicated science and reasonably expected to be Clarenceux himself. At fifty-five, after some thirty years of application, "this ingenious and modest man," as Chalmers called him, was a herald and genealogist equal to his dead master, Sir William Dugdale. Moreover, he was a statistician, an engraver and emblazoner, a painter of hatchments, coaches and signs, "a curious penman," as his epitaph records, "and well versed in politic arithmetic." In fact the only reliable statistics of contemporary England are his. He had even invaded the world of his rival, laying out Soho Square and Greek Street, once Grig Street, which may be derived from the diminutive of his Christian name. It

cannot be denied that this versatile, scholarly man was perfectly suited to the post of Clarenceux King of Arms, and should have enjoyed it. But in vain he expressed the mortification of his colleagues and himself "Vanbrugh's wit, I fear, prevailed over King's arithmetick."

As for Vanbrugh, we know that he regarded the affair as a joke, all the better for being profitable. Yet the title flattered him, and the ornament was on his chest when he sat to Kneller for his Kit-Cat portrait, and to Closterman, it seems, for the other that is hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. About Gregory King he perhaps did not think very much. He would not behave dishonourably to a soul, but honour has never been found to extend beyond the imagination of unimaginative men, and Vanbrugh was not one to inquire too nicely into the rights and wrongs of good fortune. So he told Tonson in Amsterdam that Carlisle had appointed Sir Henry St. George to be Garter King of Arms, "and me Herald Extraordinary (if the Queen pleases), in order to be Clarencieux at his return to towne, but whether we shall carry either point at Court, is not yet sure, tho' it stands home prest at this moment, and will I believe be known tonight."

That night the Queen gave her consent, and six days later, on the 21st of June, 1703, the ceremony was performed. Carlisle was delayed in London for the proceedings, impatient to return to Castle Howard, where a new quarry had been found "much better than the Old one, so all go's on smooth." But his private herald was in high spirits.

There was a great deal of Saucy Opposition, but my Ld Treasurer set the Queen right, and I have accordingly been Souc'd a Herald Extraordinary, in order to be a King at Winter. Ld Essex was left

Deputy to do the feat, which he did with a whole Bowle of wine about my ears instead of half a Spoonfull He at the same time crown'd Old Sr Harry, Garter, and King was on the Spot Suspended, which the rest seeing, renounc'd him, Own'd he drew 'em into Rebellion, and declar'd him a Son of a Whore

It is improbable that the college really behaved in this dastardly way, but it is certain that they had no personal grudge against Vanbrugh, a thing indeed it was very difficult to have, for how ever he may have offended them by his writing, he soon disarmed them with his honest nature, although *Æsop* was shortly afterwards revived at Drury Lane A more sensitive nature might have shrunk from the appointment a less charming would have failed in it

But Vanbrugh had still to be made "a King at Winter," and Gregory King, defeated in the first encounter, was not quite despairing of the second Boldly he applied for the post of Clarenceux himself, and was answered by Carlisle that he intended to appoint Vanbrugh Then King threw in his last line of attack With the help of the other heralds he drew up and presented to the Queen "a memorable petition," expressing "the just remonstrances and protests of the injured, superseded heralds " The Council considered the question in March 1704, and unanimously approved Carlisle's appointment Gregory King could do no more

On the 29th of March, Vanbrugh was installed amid the general disapproval of the College They felt deeply, as Noble their historian fairly wrote, "the slight put upon them in having a total stranger made king-at-arms the more, because though Sir John had great abilities, yet he was totally ignorant of the profession of heraldry

and genealogy, which he took every occasion to ridicule Lord Carlisle was very reprehensible in sacrificing the duty he owed, to private attachment " But the town was more amused than indignant "Now," said Swift, "Van will be able to *build houses* "

Chapter Seven

THE OPERA HOUSE

*Thus all must own, our Author has done more
For your Delight, than ever Bard before.
His thoughts are still to raise your Pleasures fill'd;
To Write, Translate, to Blazon, or to Build.
Then take him in the Lump, nor nicely pry
Into small Faults, that 'scape a busie Eye.*

STEELE

ON the day after the installation, while the Lancaster Herald was gloomily pondering his fate, Clarenceux was no doubt at Lincoln's Inn Fields in happier mood; for it was the evening of a subscription concert, but the audience was looking forward less to the music than to an entertainment that three of their favourite authors, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Walsh, had together prepared for them. It was *Squire Trelooby*, an English version of Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, and they had written it at extraordinary speed, each taking an act, so that this lively play was begun and finished in two days. Garth provided the prologue, and Congreve in the epilogue declared,

The World by this Important Project sees
Confederates can dispatch if once they please;

in which he alluded to the war, where Marlborough was urging the Confederates into action, and the great victories had yet to be won.¹

¹ The published *Squire Trelooby* was disowned by Congreve, but possibly because the play had been construed as an attack on various people of importance. The subject is fully discussed in the preface to the Nonesuch Congreve.

To write so fast was more remarkable in Congreve than in Vanbrugh, for as Cibber said, "tho' Sir John Vanbrugh had a very quick pen, yet Mr Congreve was too judicious a writer to let anything come hastily out of his hands " This natural fluency impressed him

Sir John Vanbrugh's pen is not to be a little admir'd for its spirit, ease, and readiness, in producing plays so fast, upon the neck of one another, for, notwithstanding this quick dispatch, there is a clear and lively simplicity in his wit, that neither wants the ornament of learning, nor has the least smell of the lamp in it As the face of a fine woman, with only her locks loose about her, may be then in its greatest beauty, such were his productions, only adorn'd by nature There is something so catching to the ear, so easy to the memory, in all he writ, that it has been observ'd by all the actors of my time, that the style of no author whatsoever gave their memory less trouble And indeed his wit and humour was so little laboured, that his most entertaining scenes seem'd to be no more than his common conversation committed to paper But no wonder, while his conceptions were so full of life and humour, his muse should be sometimes too warm to wait the slow pace of judgment

Impetuosity was a part of him, evident too in his buildings, and not without evil consequences, in life as well as in art

Helped by this ready wit, a youthful company at Drury Lane were fighting their way back into popularity But their famous rivals at Lincoln's Inn Fields, after a brilliant opening, soon fell into decline "Experience in a year or two shew'd them," said Cibber, "that they had never been worse govern'd than when they govern'd themselves " Quarrelling with each other, they grew indifferent to the public, and behaved as if success were their monopoly Smaller and smaller houses, however, were already telling another tale when Jeremy Collier

let fly his monstrous volley in a cloud of tempestuous smoke

Yet though the one theatre was sinking, and the other rising painfully up, a stage divided against itself could never prosper on either side. That division was Rich's outstanding achievement as a manager. And he had many ingenious ways of dealing with the result, one of which was never to pay the actors their full salaries. Meanwhile both companies were forced to cater for lower and lower tastes. Rich, in particular, was devoted to circus turns and marvellous effects.

Immortal Rich! how calm he sits at ease,
Mid snows of paper, and fierce hail of pease,
And proud his mistress' orders to perform
Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm ¹

His mistress in *The Dunciad* was, of course, Dullness, but the poor fellow tried hard enough to escape her. Once it was all a distracted carpenter could do to convince him that an "extraordinary fine elephant," however delightful in other ways, would certainly demolish the building. Rich was bitterly disappointed, for all London, he thought, would have paid to observe "the tractable genius of that vast quiet creature." Any oddity would serve to attract attention and fill the pit. A prologue was recited by a girl of four, an epilogue by a woman on horse-back. Good plays were made better with interludes of juggling, dancing, rope-walking or acrobatics. True lovers of the drama were disgusted. Their complaint was not that such entertainments ought not to exist, but that they were already amply

¹ It seems that Dennis invented a way of imitating thunder better than the old mustard-bowl method, for "once at a Tragedy he fell into a great passion at hearing some, and cry'd, 'S'death! that is my Thunder'" Pope, *Dunciad* II, 218, note.

provided by the wandering showmen of the May and Bartholomew fairs Nevertheless, the serious actor continued to collide in the wings with "Mr Cherrier, who, dancing the Punchinello Dance, was hissed, but by clapping his Hand on his Breach turned the humour of the Audience and went off with Very Great Applause "

Yet still the see-saw moved, and as Drury Lane rose up through industry, Lincoln's Inn Fields sank lower under mismanagement Critics who would hardly allow the former one merit at first, were presently altering their minds with the commoner sort It was evident that only a great change could save the veteran company from ruin, handicapped as they were by a building both wretched and remote, and in 1703 a proposal was formed to build them a magnificent theatre in the Haymarket, of which Vanbrugh, Betterton and Congreve would be joint managers, and of which Vanbrugh of course would be the architect

Probably he himself was the author of this proposal, but it would certainly have come to nothing without Kit-Cat support Again a subscription was levied for the rebel actors, and soon thirty "persons of quality" had promised 100 guineas each, in return for which they would have free entrance to all entertainments for the rest of their lives ¹ This was enough to fill Vanbrugh with every confidence, and he wrote to Tonson in Amsterdam

I have all things ready to fall to work on Munday The ground is the second Stable Yard going up the Haymarket I give 2000 for it, but have lay'd such a Scheme of matters, that I shall be reimburs'd every penny of it, by the Spare ground, but this is a Secret lest they

¹ Defoe suggests that many of the promises were never redeemed, but one payment is recorded in the diary of the Earl of Bristol for May, 1704

shou'd lay hold on't, to lower the Rent I have drawn a design for the whole disposition of the inside, very different from any Other House in being, but I have the good fortune to have it absolutely approv'd by all that have seen it However I'll willingly be at the expense of a draught of that where you are, if you'll give your self the trouble to order it The book you mention wch I wanted, you'll oblige me to get 'Tis Palladio in French, wth the plans of most of the Houses he built There is one without the Plans, but 'tis that with 'em I would have ¹

A Baroque architect was not among those who regarded "the Master" as infallible, striving only to imitate his work, nevertheless, Vanbrugh was considerably indebted to Palladio He borrowed more than one theme from the famous books, and probably took from them his classical orders, in so far as he did not leave such questions of detail to Hawksmoor It seems that Tonson did as he was asked, for in 1710 Vanbrugh wrote to a colleague at Blenheim, "Pray ask Kitt Cash if the French book of Palladio be not in Mr Strong's Shedd, I thought we had had it in Towne but don't find it" It was a book of reference not to be mislaid, and even beneath the heresies of Blenheim its dogmas may be concealed, for Strong was the master-mason there.

Queen Anne did not care for the theatre, but she meant it to be reformed, not destroyed "We have thought it fitt for the better reforming the Abuses and Immorality of the Stage, That a New Company of Comedians should be Establish'd for our Service, under stricter Governmt and Regulations than have been

¹ The "one without the Plans" appears to have been de Muet's translation of Book I in 1647, in which only the Orders are given the other, Martin's edition of all four books in 1650 Vanbrugh's knowledge of these French Palladios, that could not be obtained in England, strongly suggests an interest in architecture at the time of the imprisonment, for apparently he never again visited France

formerly " This suited the Society for Reformation of Manners well enough But then she explained that she was going to place "especiall trust and confidence in our Trusty and Welbeloved John Vanbrugh & Willm Congreve Esqrs for the due Execution of this our Will and Pleasure "

Now that was just where the worthy gentlemen of the Society, spiritual offspring of Jeremy Collier, were unable to see eye to eye with the Queen And they even wrote to Archbishop Tenison about it "The several Prosecutions we have made against the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage," they began, "are a sufficient Proof of our Zeal against Immorality and Profaneness " This was undeniable

But since the Building of the Playhouse in the Hay-Market, it is grown a general Discourse, that the Management of the Company design'd for it is to be in Mr *Vanbrook*, the known Character of which Gentleman has very much alarm'd us 'Tis impossible that Her Majesty should act so directly contrary to the End she proposed, as to commit the Management of a Stage to that very Man, who Debauch'd it to a degree beyond the Looseness of all former Times in the *Relapse*, *Provok'd Wife*, *False Friend*, and the rest of his Plays, in which he is not satisfied to reflect on the Teachers of the Christian Religion, but carried his Impious Fury as far as the Church, Morality and Religion itself Tho' there be not one of his Comedies (as he calls them) but is more remarkable for Irreligion than for Wit and Humour, yet the *Provok'd Wife* is his Master-piece in both, which made the Good and Pious Bishop of Gloucester recommend the Author to Punishment in the House of Lords And he had certainly there been Stigmatiz'd, at least, by a publick Censure, had he not had the good Fortune to have a Friend that by an admirable Dexterity Warded the Blow and Diverted the Storm from him, which he so justly deserv'd

No doubt the archbishop would have liked to help

the Society, for this "very dull man" had a horror of levity, and according to Swift, "was hot and heavy, like a tailor's goose." But he was also a believer in the Protestant Succession at any price, and consequently more in favour at a previous court than at the existing one. It was thus to a sympathetic but ineffectual prelate that the Society addressed its complaint "Is then this Author a Man fit for the Government of a Playhouse?" they asked, and no one gave them a satisfactory answer.

"The KIT-CAT Club is now grown Notorious all over the Kingdom," declared *The Rehearsal of Observator* on the 5th of May, 1705. "And they have Built a Temple for their Dagon, the new Play-House in the Hay-Market. The Foundation Stone was laid with great Solemnity by a Noble Babe of Grace [the beautiful Lady Sunderland]. And over it is a Plate of Silver, on which is graven Kit-Cat on one side, and Little Whig on the other." Through 1704 the men had been at work on a building only less important to Vanbrugh than Castle Howard, for his dearest hopes were involved in it, and his money. But in the middle of August a victory was won that for good or ill would shape the rest of his life, and it may be that Blenheim Palace had already been designed, when on Easter Monday, the 9th of April, 1705, "The Queen's Theatre, or Italian Opera House" opened with *The Loves of Ergasto*, an opera translated from the Italian of Giacomo Greber.

What must have chiefly impressed that first-night audience was the size of the gilded and painted room they entered, for it made the humble dimensions of Drury Lane and the tennis court theatre look very old-fashioned indeed. Columns and pilasters, probably of the Compo-

site order, rose to an entablature richly modelled and blazing with gilt From its cornice sprang the proscenium arch in the sweep of an ellipse, and over all there appears to have been a dome The total height may have been about fifty-five feet, and though this would not be remarkable to-day, no such building had been seen in England before We can perhaps imagine it best by thinking of the painted hall at Greenwich Hospital The whole effect must have been very splendid, for Vanbrugh's imagination was happily formed to provide the first home of a lavish and spectacular art

The Queen's Theatre endured until it was burnt down in 1789 It was then rebuilt in the style of the age, rebuilt again, and His Majesty's Theatre to-day is the fourth on Vanbrugh's site No view of the impressive interior seems to have survived, but in the British Museum there is a water-colour drawing of the entrance front made in 1783 by William Capon,¹ and from this I have ventured to reconstruct that original elevation Capon was the scene-painter and architect who helped Novosielski to decorate the new theatre after the fire, and it may be observed that he was specially celebrated for the *accuracy* with which he depicted old buildings for historical plays He added this note to his drawing —

The entrance to the Old Opera House next the Haymarket, as built by Sir John Vanbrugh The Roof of the Theatre seen over it The width from South to North was 34 feet exactly, each opening 6 feet, each pier 4 feet wide This front was built of good Red Brick and rusticated with good gaged work

¹ "William Capon delt 1783—W C pinxt 1818 " A reproduction will be found in J Palmer, *The Comedy of Manners*

Now in the sketch these parts are so nearly to scale that it was not difficult to ascribe dimensions to the whole, which are the more probable because of the extremely simple measurements into which it naturally falls. I have adjusted Capon's cornice to a more credible shape, and apart from the unusual shortness of the windows, it may be said that this plain but amiable front is entirely in what Leigh Hunt described as Vanbrugh's "no nonsense" style.

But from a plan of about 1720 in the Soane Museum we discover that what Capon drew was merely an entrance-block to one side. The theatre itself stood 50 feet back from the Haymarket, a rectangle in plan, 132 feet long, inspired perhaps by the Farnese Theatre at Parma. Unfortunately, it appears after considerable search that neither a picture nor even an adequate description has survived of this remarkable Vanbrugh building, the importance of which, I believe, has never been appreciated as a result. According to *The Foreigner's Guide to London* (1729) it was "a large Structure of Free-Stone"—probably with engaged porticoes and a dome. There is a perspective drawing of 1805 in the Museum which may possibly have some bearing on it but is more likely, I think, to show one particular stage in the rebuilding. As for Ashton, it is clear from a print in the British Museum that he merely described Novosiel-ski's theatre, imagining it to be Vanbrugh's! While in Capon's drawing, shop-fronts of early date adjoin the entrance on either side, over which no more than a straight roof can be seen. This brick-built entrance-block, that destroyed the symmetry, I suggest was an after-thought, designed by Vanbrugh when the forecourt vanished and his theatre suffered eclipse. Hogarth

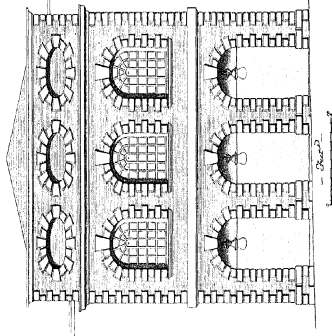
introduced it into a small engraving in 1724, with Heydegger, the organizer of masquerades, looking out of the centre window

"The Name of this Thing," wrote Defoe, "(for by its Outside it is not to be Distinguish'd from a French Church, or a Hall, or a Meeting-House, or any such Publick Building) is a Theatre, or in English, a Play-House" He devoted a whole number of his *Review*¹ to the opening, and like a good journalist flattered a disapproving public with unfavourable comments

View but our Stately Pile, the Columns stand
Like some Great Council Chamber of the Land
When Strangers View the Beauty and the State,
As they pass by, they ask 'What Church is that?'
Thinking a Nation, so Devout as we,
Ne'er built such Domes, but to some Deity
But when the Salt Assembly once they View,
What Gods they Worship, how Blaspheme the True,
How Vice's Champions, Uncontroul'd within,
Roul in the very Excrements of Sin
The Horrid Emblems so Exact appear,
That Hell's an Ass, to what's transacted here

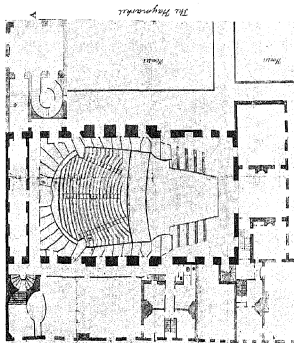
In this audacious venture Vanbrugh had assumed the double role of rescuer and pioneer. He wanted to rescue Betterton's company as he had already helped to rescue Rich's, and he wanted to introduce to Englishmen, in its true glory, an art of which they knew no more than a travesty. "Not long before this time," we read in Cibber, "the Italian opera began first to steal into England, but in as rude a disguise, and unlike itself, as possible, in a lame hobbling translation into our own language, with false quantities, or metre out of measure to its original

¹ The 3rd of May, 1705. There were more than thirty churches in London built by the Huguenot refugees



THE OPERA HOUSE

Scale elevation by Laurence Whistler of the Haymarket entrance, marked A in the plan.



An early plan. The shaded area is the original building, and the lighter parts are probably later additions.

notes, sung by our own unskilful voices, with graces misapply'd to almost every sentiment, and with action lifeless and unmeaning through every character " In fact Italian music came into England like Italian architecture a hundred years before, piecemeal and imperfectly understood This state of affairs Vanbrugh determined to amend, together with several other distinguished men who foresaw a great future for the foreign music, and who have each some kind of claim to be called the Inigo Jones of Italian opera Whether their influence on a native art was equally good is another matter

Nevertheless, in spite of the appeal of a new theatre, and in spite of the novelty of an all-Italian cast, *The Loves of Ergasto* proved a strange and ominous failure it ran for only five nights The pioneers were disturbed, but not confounded The Italians were disappointing, they said, and "being lik'd but indifferently by the Gentry, they in a little time marcht back to their own Country " Good voices, or good plays performed by the old company, would undoubtedly attract the town

But play followed play, and there was little improvement in reception Established favourites of the public seemed to have lost their charm, "the Audience falling off extremely with entertaining the Gentry with such old Ware " At last it was clear to everyone that the building itself was to blame, and not the poor humans who uttered Lilliputian sounds beneath the elliptical arch Vanbrugh's theatre was, in fact, acoustically deplorable

Almost every proper quality and convenience of a good theatre had been sacrificed, or neglected, to shew the spectator a vast triumphal piece of architecture¹ For what could their vast columns, their gilded cornices, their immoderate high roofs avail, when

scarce one word in ten could be distinctly heard in it? This extraordinary and superfluous space occasion'd such an undulation, from the voice of every actor, that generally what they said sounded like the gabbling of so many people in the lofty isles of a cathedral

Then Cibber alludes to a disadvantage that may equally be considered a proof of foresight, or incompetence. In choosing a site far removed from the City, to build the first theatre in what was, at that time literally, the "West End," Vanbrugh must have foreseen the direction in which London was spreading. Already by 1730 the great Georgian squares of Hanover, Grosvenor, and Cavendish had grown up within reasonable distance, where in the spring of 1705 there was nothing but lanes and meadows, "from whence they could draw little or no sustenance, unless it were that of a milk diet."

When the season ended in June, and the actors followed their patrons to Tunbridge Wells or Bath, Congreve quietly withdrew from the management, having contributed nothing but a name and a prologue. Perhaps if he had been less confident of success, whatever might be offered to the public, he would have provided a new comedy for the opening, as at Lincoln's Inn Fields ten years before. That would have helped, no doubt, but not greatly, "for what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud." Vanbrugh was too deeply involved to slip away in that manner. Having spent at least two-thirds of the capital subscribed, merely on acquiring a site, he had been compelled to draw freely on his own modest fortune, and the initial failure of the project no doubt was a disappointment which only the beginning of Blenheim could offset.

The withdrawal of Congreve seems to have roused Vanbrugh to a sense of responsibility. He was a busy man in 1705, yet in the three months of summer holiday he found time to write one comedy and possibly two, so that on the 30th of October, the Queen's Theatre began its second season, as it ought to have begun its first, with a new work of the first order, *The Confederacy*. He had taken another play from Dancourt that he may possibly have seen in Paris, *Les Bourgeoises à la Mode*. Translating with his usual brilliance, he turned the abstract into the concrete, plain French into colourful English. And where the Frenchman had written, "*Madame Amelin, votre marchande de modes,*" he wrote, "Madam, there's the Woman below that sells Paint and Patches, Iron-Bodice, false Teeth, and all sorts of Things to the Ladies, I can't think of her Name."

For this highly entertaining work, Vanbrugh's wit had gone to the City to call upon Gripe and Moneytrap, two scriveners horribly abused by the "expensive luxurious" women who were their wives. Clarissa Gripe had a heart above her station. "Alas," she sighed to her impudent maid Flippanta, "what signifies Beauty and Wit, when one dares neither jilt the Men, nor abuse the Women? 'Tis a sad thing, Flippanta, when Wit's confin'd, 'tis worse than the Rising of the Lights. I have been sometimes almost choak'd with Scandal, and durst not cough it up for want of being a Countess." With Barry as the mistress and Bracegirdle as the maid, *The Confederacy* should nearly have repeated the success of *The Provok'd Wife*. It would have, undoubtedly, if anyone had plainly heard it, but at birth this favourite of the century ran only for a week,

and with it the renewed hopes of the company came to an end

There was no reason to expect a better reception for Vanbrugh's other new play, *The Mistake*, when it was put on at the end of December, even though the indomitable Betterton, "the Phoenix of the Stage," rose up to take the part of Don Alvarez. For *The Mistake*, translated from *Le Dépit Amoureux* by Molière, is not a very good play, though it has a few fine passages of the true Vanbrugh. He was uncomfortable translating the subtler dialogue of Molière, followed him more closely than he followed Dancourt, yet failed to catch his spirit. If we are to believe the unreliable Cibber, he also wrote *The Cuckold in Concert*, a translation of *Le Cocu Imaginaire* by Molière that was put on in 1707, but *The Mistake* is the last of Vanbrugh's completed plays that have survived. And so the man whom Estcourt the dramatist called this year "one of the most rising Authors of the Age" wrote no more and devoted himself to architecture.

It was not, after all, a moralist who had cut short his life as a writer. Vanbrugh was unable to mend his ways, and the same delightful coarseness resides in his architraves and his dialogues. He did, however, in the end, make one notable concession to the "venom'd Priest." When *The Provok'd Wife* was revived in 1706, the advertisement spoke of "alterations,"¹ and then it was found that Sir John Brute no longer swore at the astonished watch in the gown of a clergyman, but in a lady's gown, in fact in one of Lady Brute's, stolen from a passing tailor. For as Cibber justly observed, "the character and profession

¹ J. Genest. Cibber was probably wrong in saying that these alterations were made in 1725.

of a fine lady, not being so indelibly sacred as that of a churchman, whatever follies he expos'd, kept him, at least, clear of profaneness " And Vanbrugh knew well that no clergyman would stir himself to champion the dignity of women, even though this outrageous travesty of the sex "was little better than a Mophrodite "

Chapter Eight

A NATION'S GRATITUDE

One may find a great deal of Pleasure in building a Palace for another; when one shou'd find very little in living in't ones Self.

VANBRUGH

ON the 13th of August, 1704, the French armies were broken between the Danube and the little village of Blenheim, and the news of that famous victory brought crowds into the streets of London. Probably never before had the whole of England been roused to such a pitch of enthusiasm, and when the Duke came home in December, his journey to the capital and the Queen was a Roman triumph. The captured standards and other trophies of victory were escorted by a vast procession of cavalry, infantry and pikemen to Westminster Hall. The cannon thundered, the crowds kept up an endless cheering, and Queen Anne looked on from her Palace window. Clearly some splendid reward was awaiting the good-looking hero who rode at the head of his Guards. In February, 1705, the Queen told Parliament of her desire to give him the Royal Manor of Woodstock and to replace the ruined home of Plantagenet kings with a modern palace built at her own expense; and within a month the necessary Act had been passed.

It was a Royal gift, and a Royal architect would naturally be employed. Doubtless nearly everyone supposed that Sir Christopher Wren would add one more trophy to his achievements, and fulfil at Woodstock an unfulfilled Whitehall. But the Queen left the choice of

an architect to Marlborough, and indeed the whole transaction was extremely vague—disastrously vague as it turned out “The Building,” said Vanbrugh, “was not conducted by her Board of Works, but left to him, to employ such Officers and Workmen as he should see fit,” and the Duke “cast his eye upon the Board of Works, where (for Reasons best known to himself) not inclining to engage Sir Christopher Wren, her Surveyor, he fix’d upon the next Officer to him, her Comptroller ” So Vanbrugh went down to Woodstock with the Duke—in what state of mind one can imagine—selected the site, and began to evolve his design No sooner had the Duke seen it than it was “immediately order’d to be put in Execution ”

When Marlborough returned to England, Castle Howard, then rising to its cornice, had already established Vanbrugh’s ability Carlisle, Manchester and other great friends in the Kit-Cat Club were full of his praises The Duke, I suppose, had not seen the house itself, but in the designs for it he found a monumental grandeur that he considered eminently suitable for his own, a monument if ever there was one Marlborough was a modest man, but modesty was not then what it is now, and the British people had not yet been convinced that vulgarity and a love of display are synonymous But whatever his inclination, he could hardly have chosen an architect who was not a high officer in the Board of Works without causing great indignation As it was, there was a good deal of comment on the choice Lord Ailesbury smiled when Marlborough told him “I suppose my Lord you made choice of him because he is a professed Whig ” The Duke, who claimed as the pure patriot to be above party politics, did not relish this “It was at my tongue’s

end," said Ailesbury, "for to add that he ought as well to have made Sir Christopher Wren, Poet Laureate" However, the Duke and his architect saw eye to eye about Blenheim, and that was a good omen But it was a bad omen, and more reliable, that his wife and his architect did not

Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, not unreasonably placed comfort and convenience before grandeur, wanting some noble, appropriate house in which she and the husband she so beautifully adored might spend many years of happy retirement after the war, not a vast symbolic fortress that would never be finished in his lifetime This great and formidable woman disapproved of the choice of Vanbrugh She cared very little for art in any case "I never liked any building so much for the show and vanity of it as for its usefulness and convenience, and therefore I was always against the whole design of Blenheim, as too big and unwieldy, whether I considered the pleasure of living in it, or the good of my family who were to enjoy it hereafter" Given her way—and it was only in the largest issues that she failed to have it—the Duchess would have employed Wren, as she employed him two years later for Marlborough House in London, whose neat unremarkable front suited her well enough

It seems that there was, at first, some negotiating with Wren, perhaps through the Lord Treasurer Godolphin, who shared the Duchess's point of view, for among the papers of Sir William Trumbull in the Downshire MSS, there is the following note—"Aug 26, 1705, I hear Captain Van found means to keep fair with the Duchess notwithstanding Sir Chr Wren's request" Whatever that request may have been, it certainly did

not harm the friendship of the architects Wren continued to be a kind of official adviser at Woodstock, and may well have had more interest in the building than we know. In the collection of his drawings at All Souls, there is a plan for a palace which the Wren Society editor tentatively suggests may be a scheme for Blenheim. It shows a noble system of enclosed courtyards leading from one to another, very much in the older fashion of Hampton Court.

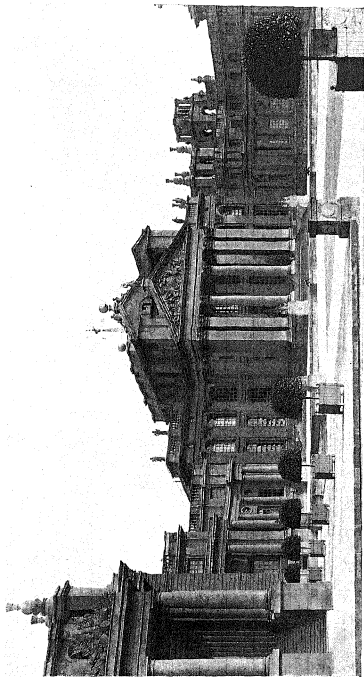
It is impossible not to mourn the loss of Wren's princely genius for Blenheim, and yet we would not relinquish the extraordinary magnificence of Vanbrugh's design. Wren in his final manner, responding to the occasion, might have evolved a palace imposing as his vision of Whitehall, and with a grandeur unknown at Hampton Court. But could he have made it a symbol, a monument to the triumph of British arms? The Duke was right. Only Vanbrugh could evoke such arrogance from masonry—the glance of Tamburlaine from a capital—and turn a Roman triumph into gesturing stone. Yet had it been possible for the two architects to collaborate here, as at Greenwich and Kensington, Blenheim might have been the most perfect, as well as the most original, of English palaces.

Soon after Parliament had sanctioned the Queen's gift, the Lord Treasurer appointed by warrant a Mr Joynes to be Comptroller of the Works at Woodstock. Hearing this, Vanbrugh was wise enough to ask whether he himself should not have "some visible Authority likewise, being to act in a Station of much greater Trust?" And on the 9th of June, 1705, Godolphin issued the warrant appointing him Surveyor.¹

¹ See Appendix II

It is remarkable that such a document could ever be drawn up by a government official and signed by a Lord Treasurer. Although Blenheim was a gift from the Queen, her chief minister declared that the Duke had "resolv'd to erect a large Fabrick at Woodstock" and that he was appointing Vanbrugh "for and on behalf of the said Duke." Moreover, no particular sum was ever mentioned for the building, and the troubles that would arise if the flow of money from the Treasury ceased were not considered. That flow of money depended on a friendly government, and behind it a friendly Queen. What would happen if the government changed and the favour of the Queen were lost—if the great Duke himself were in disgrace? In June, 1705, it was inconceivable that such things could happen, that is all. Actually the arrangement was meant to work in the following way. From time to time the Treasury would hand to the Duke large sums of money to spend as he pleased, and from time to time the Duke would settle the accounts of the workmen whom his architect had engaged. It was thought that by this means he would enjoy the double advantage of building Blenheim his own way and having it paid for by somebody else. It meant in fact that he scrupulously avoided signing a single bill for fear of acknowledging the debts as his own, and yet, that if the Treasury ever ceased to pay them, it would be himself whom the workmen sued.

The spring of 1705 was at once a hopeful and anxious time for Vanbrugh. We must think of him with his two great ventures, probably topics of equal interest in London—the Opera House and Blenheim. On the 9th of April, the former had opened splendidly, and failed as sadly in a few days. Vanbrugh was disappointed,



BLenheim PALACE, the Entrance Front.

puzzled, but still sanguine All this time he continued to attend the board meetings for Greenwich Hospital regularly, and this in the thick of evolving Blenheim The design must have been shown and approved many weeks before the warrant appointed him Surveyor, for nine days afterwards came the ceremony of laying the foundation stone William Upcott has described it in his diary

About six o'clock in the evening, was laid the first stone of the Duke of Marlborough's house, by Mr Vanbrugge, and then seven gentlemen [Hawksmoor being one] give it a stroke with a hammer, and threw down each of them a guinea There were several sorts of musick, three morris dances, one of young fellows, one of maidens, and one of old beldames There were about a hundred buckets, bowls, and pans, filled with wine, punch, cakes, and ale From my lord's house all went to the Town Hall where plenty of sack, claret, cakes etc, were prepared for the gentry and better sort, and under the Cross eight barrels of ale, with abundance of cakes, were placed for the common people

With his infallible sense of scenery, Vanbrugh had chosen the site on a broad tableland toward the southern end of the park Northward the ground, cut across by the Glyme brook, dived steeply into a remarkable valley and rose as steeply beyond, with old Woodstock Manor, half-ruined, that little palace where the Black Prince grew up, a picturesque group of walls on the other brow Close by was the Bower where Henry II had enjoyed Fair Rosamond, whose skin was so delicate, it is said, that the blood could be seen sliding in her veins

In Vanbrugh's imagination there was already a wide avenue passing those walls, a great bridge hooping the valley between two lakes, and set back upon the southern

crest the broken skyline of a palace fraternising with cumulus and thundercloud, from which point, the Manor would form a romantic ruin to the right of the central vista ¹ He has told us how he explained to Queen Anne what kind of a house she was giving

That the Queen might not be decerv'd in what she Directed and be Afterwards dissatisfy'd with it, A very large, Exact, And intelligible Model of the Building was made in Wood and when it was compleated it was set in the Gallery at Kensington by her Order, and there left sometime, that she might Consider it at her leisure, both Alone and with other people She was pleased to View it thoroughly with the Prince, and to Ask all Questions Necessary, for the Understanding it Perfectly She Expressed her Self extreamly pleased with it, Shew'd a desire of having it dispatch'd with all Aplication, and requir'd no sort of Alteration in it This model I have carefully preserv'd at Kensington that it may appear I have exactly follow'd it

At a first glance it might seem that Vanbrugh had reproduced the plan of Castle Howard—a house with wings projecting at right angles to compose a forecourt, and behind these wings the kitchen and stable courts But a second glance would discover an important modification At Blenheim the forecourt is widened to embrace the whole front and so immensely deepened (to over 300 feet) that the house is thrown back quite clear of the rest, to which it is joined by advancing colonnades In this way it becomes almost a separate block with two valuable eastern and western fronts that could not exist at Castle Howard The east front was planned to contain, as it does to this day, the private apartments of the Duke and Duchess, and it was here that the work began The corresponding front to the west would be devoted to a

¹ Curiously enough, at Floors in Scotland, ascribed to Vanbrugh, the ruins of Roxburgh Castle occupy the same position See Appendix I, p 298

single gallery, and in between along the southern front would lie the rooms of state, with a saloon as large as the portico in front of it, entirely painted by Laguerre

It has always been urged against Vanbrugh that he thought of the splendour of his designs before the convenience, and at that, of the exterior before the interior, that nearly all his rooms are ill-shaped, small, draughty and badly situated. Among the first to put this criticism into memorable form was Dr Abel Evans, that "furious madman," as Gray called him, who wrote an amusing poem "Upon the Duke of Marlborough's House at Woodstock"

"See, sir, here's the grand approach,
This way is for his Grace's coach,
There lies the bridge and here's the clock,
Observe the lion and the cock,
The spacious court, the colonnade,
And mark how wide the hall is made!
The chimneys are so well design'd
They never smoke in any wind
This gallery's contrived for walking,
The windows to retire and talk in,
The council chamber for debate,
And all the rest are rooms of state!"

"Thanks, sir," cried I, "'tis very fine,
But where d'ye sleep, or where d'ye dine?
I find by all you have been telling
That 'tis a house, but not a dwelling"

Vanbrugh stoutly denied the accusation. In better poetry than he ever put into rhyme, he wrote, one autumn,

I hope, however, at last, I shall see you as well pleased as the Lord of this place is, who has now within this week had a fair tryall of his dwelling, in what he most apprehended, which was cold

For, tho' we have now had as bitter storms as rain and wind can well compose, every room in the house is like an oven, and in the corridors of 200 ft long there is not air enough in motion to stir the flame of a candle I hope to find the same comfort in your Chateau, when the North West blows his hardest, so pray don't think you'll stand in need of a few poor trees to screen you

He was writing to the owner of Kings Weston about the owner of the Castle Howard And a few days later from the same house he wrote,

I am much pleased here (amongst other things) to find Lord Carlisle so thoroughly convinced of the Conveniencys of his new house, now he has had a years tryall of it And I am the more pleas'd with it, because I have now a proof that the Dutchess of Marlborough must find the same conveniency in Blenheim For my Lord Carlisle was pretty much under the same Apprehensions with her, about long Passages, High Rooms, &c But he finds what I told him to be true That those Passages would be so far from gathering & drawing wind as he feared, that a Candle wou'd not flare in them Of this he has lately had the proof, by bitter stormy nights in which not one Candle wanted to be put into a Lanthorn, not even in the Hall, which is as high (tho not indeed so big) as at Blenheim He likewise finds, that all his Rooms, with moderate fires Are Ovens, And that this Great House, do's not require above One pound of wax, and two of Tallow Candles a night to light it, more than his house in London did

And it is true that the night rain still troubles the windows of the cupola without disturbing the tower of warmth below

A certain amount of criticism is founded on the assumption that what would be inconvenient now must always have been inconvenient But that does not follow Vanbrugh designed these palaces to accommodate an elaborate and ceremonious way of living that nowhere exists to-day The noblemen of Queen Anne required

the state apartments and the antechambers, the long suites where the bedroom led into the drawing-room, and the long corridors behind¹ Their descendants walk through the gilded rooms with a party of guests, sometimes eat in one or dance in another, but they do not use them And yet in the main the criticism is just—Vanbrugh's rooms are both ill-proportioned and mean Though they tower up into shadows, they can be crossed in a few strides Only saloon and gallery at Blenheim are at all worthy of the exterior, and not until the end of his life, perhaps, did Vanbrugh produce a room that even approaches in majesty Inigo Jones's Double Cube at Wilton

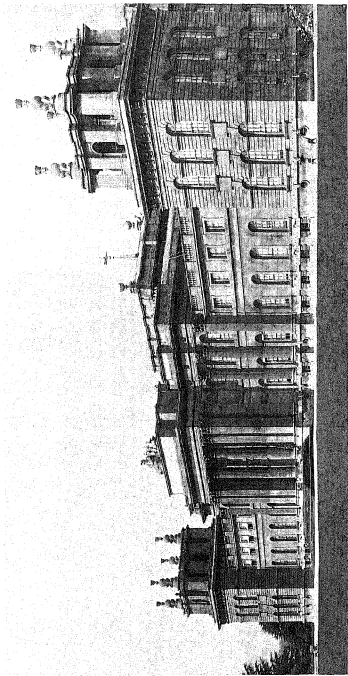
There is a sheet of paper in Sir John Soane's Museum which has a plan on each side of it,—one, of the proposed chapel at Greenwich, the other, of the ground floor at Blenheim It was chiefly at Greenwich Hospital that Vanbrugh gained the experience that enabled him to make of Blenheim a stronger and maturer work than Castle Howard, and the abandoned chapel scheme has a good deal in common with both I have said that by a development of planning the house at Blenheim is virtually separated from the outlying courts Yet it is essential that this separation should not be seen from the north, for the building must appear one monumental unit—it must not relax into the broken, fairy-tale outline of Castle Howard At the same time, the east and west fronts, grown important, demand a symmetrical treatment Now there can only be symmetry on four sides of a square building if the corners are the same Vanbrugh accepted the challenge He emphasised the central building with four immense

¹ "Vanbrugh understood better than either [Jones or Wren] the art of living among the great A commodious arrangement of apartments was therefore his peculiar merit"—Robert Adam

towers of identical design, and yet managed with a skill that is masterly to introduce the two northerly towers into his entrance front, not to break it up, but to bind it together

Towers at corners, round-headed windows, ponderous keystones and ringed columns, it is in these that we recognise most quickly the signature of that generous hand. The four towers that he continually repeated as a theme until the end of his life are medieval in origin, their ancestors stand at Rochester, Bolton and Tattershall. For that reason, at Castle Howard he used them only in the base courts, not yet daring, or caring, to venture on great innovations. But the medieval took possession of him. Blenheim is as much a castle as a palace, and more of one than Castle Howard, with its almost Palladian regularity, its sculptured wreaths and dolphins, its smiling grace. "Pyramids are Gothick, Pots are modern French," said Wren, with doubtful accuracy, and on this occasion Vanbrugh eschewed them both. There is no smiling grace about the garden front of Blenheim, the grandest, if not the most mature, of his designs. The portico is bare, the wings end in elephantine towers instead of slim pavilions, the architraves are plain, or there are no architraves, there is no embellishment. The house stands up like a fortress in its variety and rugged outline. It is Roman and medieval at once: the Rome and Middle Ages of the soldier, of hard campaigning and triumphant returns.

After the laying of the foundation stone, the work had begun in real earnest. Wren went down to Woodstock and estimated that the cost would be £100,000. But that figure applied only to what Vanbrugh called "the magnificent part", nothing was said about the rest. But



BLENHEIM PALACE, the Garden Front. Above the portico is Louis XIV's bust, a trophy from the gates of Tournai.

privately he knew that at least as much again would be required for the office courts, gardens, avenues, bridge, causeway and lake of his extravagant dream. And so in another vague arrangement the seeds of trouble were sown.

Lastly, contractors had to be found, and here there was no question of employing local men to do the best they could, as at the beginning of Castle Howard. The finest master masons in England were at Vanbrugh's disposal, and he decided to spread the work among four or five "to raise an Emulation amongst them." Wren had already done this at St. Paul's, but his chief men had always been the brothers Strong. The elder having now died, Edward Strong was head of that old family firm with a quarry in the Cotswolds, and as the Cathedral rose to its golden ball, he became the chief mason at Blenheim. Other contractors employed were Townsend and Banks, Oxford worthies who were building Queen's College for Hawksmoor, and whom Vanbrugh would employ again at Kings Weston.

To think of so many men from all parts of the country leaving their homes and clustering like ants to the foundations made the Duke happy in his tent—"I own to you I have a very great desire to have that work at Woodstock finished, and if I can be so happy as to live some years in quietness there with my dear soul, I shall think myself fully recompensed for all the vexations and trouble I am now obliged to undergo." Vanbrugh too was happy, agreeing entirely with his colleagues, even with Boulter, "a Creature of her Graces," whom the Duchess had turned into another Comptroller to keep a strict eye on her architect, for the contracts had to be signed by all three. "You never had in your Life," Vanbrugh told him, "to do with any body more easy than you'll find

me, & I beg nothing may ever happen to make any dispute between us" Nothing ever did But that was not exactly what her grace had meant

Vanbrugh of course had by him his old assistant, Hawksmoor They had been working together now for five years If I have mentioned him only once in this chapter, it is because I have been writing of Blenheim as a whole, and Blenheim as a whole is Vanbrugh's And yet there is not one detail of which one could say with certainty that Hawksmoor had not designed it In after years he finished the western part of the house and the long gallery alone, and the style of those rooms is indistinguishable from that of the rest "There's none can judg so well of the designe," he wrote in 1725, "as the person that composed it, therefore I should beg leave to take a Convenient Time to Slip downe"

It was Hawksmoor's fate to put a great deal of good work into the world for which he was neither rewarded in his own age nor honoured by posterity Instead, they turned him out of the Office of Works—"And I served always for half or less than what they allowed Sir John, altho I had ten times ye fatigue" It is a tired voice that wanders from letter to letter, the tone plaintive in adversity, so very different from Vanbrugh's

However he must be kept in, pay'd his Salary and Arrear and I dismiss'd, and starved

Though when the Building began, all of them (the Builders) put together, could not Stir an Inch without me

I mention this to Shew Your Grace the great and good Success that attends that gentleman, and ill Luck that follows me

Only jealousy, that optimist about all mankind but its victim, could see Vanbrugh's career in such an enviable light in the year 1725

The first trouble had come with the frosts of winter. The local stone was found to be "extreme bad" and cracking, and all the enemies of Blenheim, including its mistress, stirred in their wrath. "The flying of the Stone has made a great noise," said Vanbrugh, and he tried to put the blame on insufficient covering. But the park quarry had to be abandoned, and some of the walls rebuilt, and the Duchess discovered another grievance when hauling the stone over long distances increased the cost. All the same, the work went on with wonderful speed, and though nothing had been finished, nearly everything had been begun. This exasperated her more than anything, to hear of Vanbrugh strolling about the park with Mr. Wise, the famous garden-maker, pegging out the parterre and the avenues, and beginning "Upon the Foundations of the Bridg." And Vanbrugh was right, for trees must be planted while walls creep up, if they are to be any pleasure in a lifetime. Yet demands for money were large and frequent, and the Treasury were falling behind. Vanbrugh was not ruffled. The Duke would adjust matters with the government before leaving for Flanders in the spring, so that he was in full hopes, "We may begin Our Campaign at least as soon as he do's his."

By the time the Duke returned, with Ramillies to his glory, he had heard from Godolphin that "The building is so far advanced that one may perfectly see how it will be when it is done." And by the middle of 1707 a roof was on the eastern range where he hoped to go to bed one day with his dear soul, and Vanbrugh was arranging for "a different Sort of Shash, which is not only thicker than the Others we design'd, but made in a Manner much more close and lasting."

Chapter Nine

AN INTERLUDE & A CONCLUSION

And yet I don't doubt but Operas will Settle and thrive in London.

VANBRUGH

FROM the troubles of the Opera House and Blenheim the spring of 1706 had at least provided one pleasant diversion. On the 4th of April, George-Augustus, Prince Electoral of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and afterwards King George II of England, was elected to the Order of the Garter in place of the Duke of Zell, lately deceased. Normally the Garter King of Arms would carry out the investiture, but "Old Sir Harry" was far too infirm to make so long a journey abroad, and so it was Clarenceux who drove into Hanover on Sunday evening, the 6th of June, with the robes and insignia in his trunk, and fortified with weighty "Instructions for our Trusty and Right Welbeloved Counsellor Charles Lord Halifax, our Envoy Extraordinary, and our Trusty and Welbeloved John Vanbrugh Esq." It was, in fact, to be a thoroughly Kit-Cat affair, and Queen Anne left the arrangements very much to the discretion of the two old friends,

not doubting but all things that concern the said Occasion will by your Care Prudence and Dexterities be so well performed, as it will redound to Our most advantage, the honour of Our most Noble Order and that Prince Our Dear Cousins Satisfaction.

Next day the two Commissioners handed their

credentials to the Baron de Goertz, President of the Council, and learnt that the Elector (afterwards George I) did not intend to conduct the investiture himself, which as a Knight of the Garter he might have done. It was then decided to telescope three separate preliminary rituals into one audience, partly to save the Prince unnecessary fatigue, and partly because the Elector wished them to cut down ceremonial to a minimum, in order that his son's investiture might not be as grand as his own. And to this end he would not even allow him to receive his habit under a gold and crimson canopy, but only in a chair.

At 12 o'clock on Friday, the 11th of June, the Baron de Goertz and other eminent persons arrived to escort the Commissioners to the Audience, in two coaches drawn by six horses each and six coaches drawn by two horses each. The streets were lined with Hanoverians eager to catch a glimpse of the two Englishmen, for England, symbolised by the conquering Duke, was immensely popular, and one day, it was thought, the two peoples would be united under a single crown. Arrived at the inner court of the Palace, the Commissioners alighted, to find M. de Hardenburg at the foot of the stair, and the Baron de Goertz again at the top. They then proceeded along the Gallery to the Prince's apartments, greeted at every door by further groups of bowing courtiers, who melted into the tail of the procession with subdued comments and the seemly whispering of silk. And so they came to the antechamber, "where the Company falling off on each hand made a lane for the Commrs to pass through into the Chamber, where His Hs staid to receive them."

Perhaps it was a relief to be alone with just the one

Hanoverian Halifax opened with a short speech explaining the Queen's personal motives in conferring the honour, though it was perfectly understood by all three to be an act of friendship between governments. Then "Mr Vanbrugh addressed himself to His Highness in a few words, and presented him with the Book of Statutes," so that he might learn what would be required of him as a new member. While the Prince was staring at this with unseeing eyes, Vanbrugh slipped out into the ante-chamber, put on the mantle of the Order, and returned with the Blue Ribbon and the Diamond. Then when the Prince declared (having studied the Statutes) that he would abide by the ancient rules laid down in them, Vanbrugh gave the Blue Ribbon Garter to Halifax, the Prince raised his Georgian foot upon a stool, and the two Commissioners stooped and tied it on, "Mr Vanbrugh reading the proper Admonition." A similar ritual was performed with the Diamond George, which was put over the Prince's left shoulder and under his right arm, and the ceremony was at an end. Bowing low, the Commissioners took their leave and were conducted to another part of the building, where they met the Electress, her brother-in-law, and the two princesses. Presently the Prince followed them, and last of all came the Elector. Then the Commissioners dined with the family, and were taken back to their lodgings by the eight coaches and the twenty-four horses.

But the public and really grand part of the ceremony was still to come. After a day's respite, in which the architect may have amused himself by scrutinising the city, at six o'clock on Sunday evening the Baron appeared with the full complement of *grandees*, coaches and horses, and bore the two Commissioners away to Court.

for the second time. There they were received with the same politeness at every stage, and proceeding to the antechamber, Vanbrugh put on his robes, and they were once more ushered into the Presence. At once they began to undress the Prince, a process retarded by short speeches, admonitions, the handing of garments from one to another, and a lively sense of the awful nature of the act. This done, they dressed him up in the Coat, Sword and Belt, Garter and Diamond of the Order, and then when the Prince had signed and handed them a receipt to which his seal had already been affixed, the three of them together left the chamber.

The rest of the insignia—Mantle, Hood, Great Collar, Diamond Garter, Diamond Cap, and Stars—had previously been arranged by Vanbrugh on a great cushion of crimson velvet in the antechamber. Taking it up in his arms—an action that required help—he and Halifax set off through the palace in front of the Prince, to the Great Chamber where the public investiture would be performed. As they approached, a growing roar of conversation, like the ominous pounding of a waterfall, frayed off into silence at the voice of an official. And so through the middle of a great throng of courtiers, men and women, German and English, with the Electoral family somewhere among them, the little procession passed, pulling all glances after it as the finger of a child pulls out a spider's web. Some were looking at the Prince's blue garter, coat and sword, some at Lord Halifax, and some at the figure in front, magnificent in periwig and robes, who carried with an air of imperturbable dignity a large red cushion with a glittering cargo.

At the end of the room there were three arm-chairs arranged, and next to Vanbrugh's, on the Prince's

left, there was a table on which he cautiously put down his load. After a few minutes' relaxation, if so it may be called, in the gaze of the Court, the three stood up for Halifax to deliver a short speech. Then Vanbrugh handed the Queen's Commission to Halifax, who handed it to the Prince, who handed it to a secretary, who read it aloud, all standing the while. Then the Prince sat down, and the Commissioners, lifting his leg on to a couple of cushions, took off the Blue Ribbon Garter and put on the Diamond Garter, after which he rose again and was invested in turn with the Mantle, Hood, Great Collar and George, while Vanbrugh read the admonition again and again. And finally he put on the Cap and Feathers, which in accordance with his own desire had been studded with diamonds. Then with a short complimentary speech from Vanbrugh, proclaiming the Queen's and the Prince's titles, and another from Halifax, and the presentation of "the two Glories or Stars," and of the two pieces of ribbon of the Order, this formidable ceremony was at an end, and after a well-earned though still public rest, they left in single file, the Prince "receiving the compliments of the whole Court," and the indispensable Baron de Goertz holding his train.

The eight coaches that restored two Englishmen to their lodgings, somewhat relieved and exhausted, one imagines, after the Prince had cordially thanked them, allowed but an hour's respite before they were at the door again to carry them away to a Court Ball. No wonder old Sir Henry St. George had felt unequal to the job. But Gregory King may have sighed when he heard how the Commissioners ate regularly at the Elector's table and were treated in every way like ambassadors.

Yet who can doubt that Vanbrugh was a more charming and diplomatic, in fact in every way a much better envoy than King would have been? Besides he had gone over among friends Dorset, for example, was staying with Halifax, and was allowed a coach and six horses for his private use, the Elector being quite as keen to ingratiate himself with his future subjects as the Whigs were anxious to curry favour with their future King. There were many of them at Hanover, and the town was unusually gay, for—as if in the last Act of a Comedy—“yesterday morning a speedy marriage was declared at Court, to be speedily consummated.” It was between the Prince Royal of Prussia and the Elector’s daughter, Dorothea Sophia, a pretty girl of nineteen. Trumpets sounded from the palace, there was a great ball at night, and cannon thundered below the music, vibrating the chandeliers. With this, and the arrival of the King of Prussia, the Elector was too busy to grant the Commissioners and the rest of the English party their Audience of Leave, and they lingered on, taking part in the festivities. So that it was quite three weeks before Vanbrugh set out for Holland on his homeward journey.

Arrived in London, he found the company in the Haymarket so despondent that he willingly allowed them to act whatever they liked, after the last opera of the season, until August the 23rd, renouncing his own share in the receipts. Even so, these did not amount to half their proper salaries. The truth is, that quite apart from the deficiencies of the theatre, the old company were sadly decayed. They had no longer the mature brilliance of the men and women who eleven years before had revolted from the crazy rule of Rich. Some, like Kynaston, Leigh and Sandford, were dead, others

were pensioned off Betterton himself, though still incomparable, was over seventy, and it was many years since Dryden had written,

He like the Setting Sun, still shows a Glimmery Ray,
Like Antient ROME Majestick in decay

"Thus, then," in the words of Cibber, "were these remains of the best set of actors, that I believe were ever known at once in England, by time, death, and the satiety of their hearers, mould'ring to decay"

Vanbrugh had done what he could, but the best play would not materially improve their fortunes, least of all in his theatre. At last he sickened of the effort and looked about for a means of escape. But that was not so easily found—until Owen Swiney presented himself. Swiney was a remarkable person in many ways, but what exactly he did it would be difficult to say, for he was a kind of free-lance at everything, yet too adventurous to be a dilettante. He was a plain-spoken, cheerful man with bright eyes and a mop of black hair, known in every European capital and ready at half a day's notice, according to Cibber, to run a friend's errand to Constantinople. In old age he became the doting admirer of Peg Woffington.

When it seemed that he might take over the theatre on a lease, Vanbrugh proposed an arrangement whereby Swiney should pay him £5 for every acting night, the total rent for the year not to exceed £700. This was a sad end to his brave undertaking, but he was not in a strong position to drive bargains, and in any case the management of a theatre was becoming increasingly difficult, with so much time required for architectural work. Swiney asked for a day or two to reflect. Now Vanbrugh

must have known that he was the bosom friend and virtually the agent of Christopher Rich, and that when he closed with the offer, it was Rich who had made the decision. In fact it suited that curious individual well enough, with his slippery love of vague arrangements, for "the real truth was," in Cibber's words, "that he had a mind both companies should be clandestinely under one and the same interest, his own, and yet in so loose a manner, that he might declare his verbal agreement with Swiney good, or null and void, as he might best find it his account in either." Moreover, Swiney owed him over £200, so that Rich believed that he would have both him and the Opera House in his pocket.

He began his manoeuvres by allowing Swiney to depopulate the Theatre Royal. All the good actors went over to the Opera House, with the exception of Cibber, and the patentee was at last free to indulge his heart's desire of running music-hall turns and only music-hall turns. When the Opera House reopened in October, 1706, it was the first time for eleven years that the best actors in London had appeared on the same stage. An immediate improvement in audiences showed the value of reunion. But for Rich the scheme was not working satisfactorily at all. He had quite underestimated Swiney's strength of character, and had had a disastrous quarrel with him about Cibber, which not only lost him his one remaining actor of importance, but also that very control of Vanbrugh's theatre for which he had depopulated his own. Worse still, in a moment of convivial generosity, Sir Thomas Skipwith had literally given away his share in the patent to the handsome and delightful Colonel Brett, with whom he was staying at

Shandywell in Gloucestershire It had been one thing to deprive the weak-kneed Skipwith of his lawful profits for ten years It would be quite another to deal with the energetic soldier And ominously enough the Colonel soon came up to London to be instructed by Cibber how best to manage his colleague

It was the great ambition of these two, as of all sensible men who really cared for the drama, to see the actors securely and permanently united in a single company again Vanbrugh had deplored the schism as long ago as the writing of *Æsop*, in which he naturally supported the Theatre Royal, where it was given Meanwhile, a year's lease of his theatre had taught him that the terms were highly unprofitable, and in February, 1708, he bought Swiney right out, retaining him only as a manager Then at last, when, among others, Marlborough had exerted his powerful influence, the object was attained, and Vanbrugh wrote to the Earl of Manchester in Italy that the Queen had "put an end to the Playhouse Factions" The actors must return in a body under their old patent, Drury Lane must perform nothing but plays, the Haymarket nothing but opera,—

and both go on in a very Successfull manner, without disturbing one an Other This Settlement pleases so well, that people are now eager to See Operas carry'd to a greater perfection, And in Order to it the Towne crys out for A Man and Woman of the First Rate to be got against Next Winter from Italy

Taking heart from the new arrangement, Vanbrugh threw himself into the business of getting them Luckily he could write at this moment, "My Affairs are all thank God in a much more prosperous state than When yr Ldship left London" Manchester had moved on from

Paris to become Ambassador at Venice, where he could personally engage the singers that London was so keen to hear. He was a great patron of the arts, who in a year or two attended the first triumphant performance of *Agrippina* and induced Handel to come to England, *Rinaldo* being performed at the Opera House in 1710.

But at this date opera was still in a very primitive condition in London, so that Steele reported, "a great Critic fell into fits in the gallery, at seeing not only Time and Place, but Languages and Nations confused in the most incorrigible manner." It was only in 1707 that London had listened to Italian singers of any real merit, Valentini, a eunuch, and a woman called "The Baroness." But the man and woman of the first rate whom the promoters had in mind were Nicolini and Santini. Vanbrugh proposed that they should be offered £1,000 each to sing for two winters, but feared that Valentini would try to prevent their coming, although he professed to desire it, because he had allied himself with the Englishwoman, Mrs Tofts, "who is wonderfully improved," and hoped to drive a hard bargain for the next season himself. However, negotiations proceeded until rather suddenly Vanbrugh wearied once again of the whole unprofitable business. He had more of the artistic temperament than a sanguine attitude to life betrayed, and his judgment was anything but good. One week the world appeared to smile on him as a favourite child, and the next to abandon him utterly. That spring he told the Earl, "I have parted with my whole concern to Mr Swiney, only reserving my Rent. So that he is entire Possessor of the Opera, And most People think, will manage it better than any body. I lost so Much Money by the Opera this Last Winter, that I was glad

to get quit of it, And yet I don't doubt but Operas will Settle and thrive in London "

And so Vanbrugh escaped from his adventure, but not from the consequences, which in the form of a large debt remained to keep him in perpetual anxiety, if not actual poverty, for the greater part of his life Yet still he continued to write to Manchester about "a perfect good Violin to Lead and Govern the Orcastre," and in 1719 became a director of the Royal Academy of Music, a society formed to promote Italian Opera The pioneering spirit had not died in him

It only remains to say farewell to the theatre and Christopher Rich, who were still in a tight embrace, like Laocoon and the serpent Although there had not been such contentment at the Theatre Royal for fifteen years, Rich could not bear to think that it had been brought about by the energy and charm of another, and he studiously set to work to be rid of Colonel Brett, even at the expense of injuring himself Whether he would have succeeded, one does not know, for at this moment Skipwith put in a legal claim for the restoration of his powers, which he declared he had never really given away, and Brett in disgust threw up a patent that he alone had made valuable

Rich seemed to think it might be best to mark his return to power by some small though memorable act, and so he told the players that henceforth they must pay him a third of the profits of their benefit nights, on pain of having no benefit nights at all As once before, they appealed to the Lord Chamberlain, who presently allowed them to make a secret agreement with Swiney to move over in a body to the Opera House At last, when all was ready, with elaborate mock-courtesy

one of them delivered the order to Rich, and then, throwing himself into an attitude, cried like Henry VIII to Wolsey, "Read o'er this and then to breakfast with what appetite you have "

Installed in the Haymarket in 1709, the new company wisely began by altering the structure. They removed that heavy eyebrow, the elliptical arch, lowered the ceiling, and reduced the width of the auditorium with three flights of boxes on either side, and in this manner, effectively laid the worst of the echoes, that confabulation of phantoms that had haunted the great gilded room from the day of opening. It is probable that Vanbrugh supervised the whole work of reconstruction, and it may have been at this time that the theatre, robbed of its dome, was hidden behind the houses and the entrance block of Capon's drawing. Given time, they would have entirely remodelled the interior on Drury Lane, for Wren, without Vanbrugh's knowledge of theatrical needs, had built a theatre that suffered from no serious disadvantage. The alterations soon proved to be a good investment, and it seemed at last that the company would enjoy a measure of prosperity.

Meanwhile a certain fashionable lawyer called William Collier obtained a licence to reopen the Theatre Royal with a new company, the ban on the patentees remaining in force. But Rich would never render up the keys, so one night during the Sacheverell trial, collecting a gang of ruffians from the mad, excited streets, Collier burst open the doors, and found himself—in a denuded building. Warned of his approaching doom, Rich had taken away and sold every object that could be moved, leaving to the conqueror "nothing but an empty stage, full of trap doors, known only to himself and his adherents "

Steele in the *Tatler* published an account of the sad dispersal

This is to give notice, that a magnificent palace, with great variety of gardens, statues, and waterworks, may be bought cheap in Drury Lane, where there are likewise several castles to be disposed of, very delightfully situated, as also groves, woods, forests, fountains and country-seats, with very pleasant prospects on all sides of them, being the moveables of Christopher Rich, Esqre, who is breaking up house-keeping

Inventory

Three bottles and a half of lightning

The complexion of a murderer in a handbox

One shower of snow in the whitest French paper

Two showers of a browner sort

A sea, consisting of a dozen large waves, the tenth bigger than the ordinary, and a little damaged

A dozen and a half of clouds, trimmed with black and well-conditioned

A set of clouds after the French mode, streaked with lightning, and furbelowed

An imperial mantle made for Cyrus the Great, and worn by Julius Caesar, Bajazet, King Harry the Eighth, and Signor Valentini

A wild boar killed by Mrs Tofts and Dioclesian

A setting sun, a pennyworth

A new moon, something decayed

A basket-hilted sword, very convenient to carry milk in

A rainbow, a little faded

On the night before the attack it seems that Rich's followers had deserted "Door-keepers came out clad like cardinals, and scene-drawers like heathen gods" Only Rich remained, the story goes, until with the

splintering of panels, a sudden cheer of drunken voices echoed through the empty building, and then, "wrapped in one of his own black clouds," he slunk out into the night, never to return

Chapter Ten

DESTROYER AND PRESERVER

*I do love these ancient ruins.
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history.*

WEBSTER

IT was on the 18th of July, 1707, that Vanbrugh wrote to Lord Manchester about the collapse at Kimbolton. He knew it would not be a shock, for Lady Manchester had already sent out to Italy "an Account by What means the whole garden Front has come downe." And, he said, "she did me the honour (when she saw it must do so) to ask my Advice in carrying it up Again. I cou'd not go downe just then, but did soon after, and got Mr. Hawkesmoor downe with me: where, having consider'd every thing, we all Agreed Upon the enclos'd Design." As English Ambassador at Venice, the Earl was unofficially a kind of artistic and theatrical agent, since it was to him that Englishmen appealed for the beauties of Italy, and through him that Italy exported those commodities, whether 3,000 yards of satins, damasks and velvets for the Duchess to decorate Blenheim, or a good voice for the Italian Opera House, or the painter Pellegrini to adorn Castle Howard. In choosing Vanbrugh for the work of restoration, Lady Manchester was certainly anticipating the wishes of her husband.

Kimbolton Castle in Huntingdonshire, a fortress of the small quadrangular type, had only just been rebuilt

when Catherine of Aragon retired from London after her divorce, to die in it. A century later it had passed into Montagu hands, and Vanbrugh's friend, the fourth Earl of Manchester, took possession in 1683. He was an uncompromising Whig who had taken a body of horse to William's landing, and in the triumph of the Revolution, considerably the richer, he began to improve his rather dilapidated house. He refaced the enclosed courtyard in the delightful red brick and stone of the day, reminiscent of Hampton Court, but the four outward fronts continued to present a muddled appearance, and it was the southward of these that tumbled down in 1707.

That charming courtyard was probably the work of Coleman, an architect of some merit who appears to have been the Earl's official surveyor. He had already submitted a scheme for rebuilding the ruined front when the great architects came down from London. They saw it would never do. "He had not brought the Door of the House into the Middle of the Front," said Vanbrugh, and he rejected at once such a feeble surrender to convention. The difficulty was, that custom demanded one should "go immediately out of the Drawing Room into the Bedchamber." But the Kimbolton drawing-room was in the right-hand corner, and if the new bedroom had been next to it, in the middle, "there cou'd have been no regular or proper way out of this Front into the Garden, which would have been an Unpardonable want." So Vanbrugh did not hesitate to place between them "a large Noble Room of Parade" which would give him his central doorway in line with the canal.

That he had a very real tenderness for old buildings will presently appear, but it was not, admittedly, the

antiquarian sort that dotes on every battered crocket
He respected the rooms in which Catherine of Aragon
had lived, and he consulted, in Pope's phrase, the
genius of the place

As to the Outside, I thought 'twas absolutely best, to give it
Something of the Castle Air, tho' at the Same time to make it
regular So I hope your Ldship won't be discouraged, if any Italians
you may Shew it to, shou'd find fault that 'tis not Roman, for to
have built a Front with Pillasters, and what the Orders require,
cou'd never have been born with the Rest of the Castle I'm sure
this will make a very Noble and Masculine Shew, and is of as
Warrantable a kind of building as Any

He was afraid that Venetian opinion might see nothing
in his work but barbarous ignorance, and indeed there
is scarcely an Italian architect of any century who would
have understood him, unless it were Sanmichele In
his next letter he reported that the work had begun

I lik'd mighty well what was done, And Coleman Own'd he begun
to discover a Gusto in it, that he had no Notion of before I shall be
much deceiv'd if People don't see a Manly Beauty in it when tis
up, that they did not conceive cou'd be produced out of such rough
Materialls, But tis certainly the Figure and Proportions that make
the most pleasing Fabrick, And not the delicacy of the Ornaments

Vanbrugh was always ingenuously delighted to see
how well his thoughts were turning into stone "I
Apprehend but One thing," he wrote after a few months'
building, "wch is, That your Ldship will two or three
years hence find your self under a violent Temptation
to take downe and rebuild (suitable to this New Front)
all the Outside Walls round the Castle But I'll say no
more of that, 'till I see you at home and Secretary of
State again " And he was right, for in time he gave the
whole castle his treatment of plain walls and regular

sash windows It is not a successful work, displaying little imagination to atone for the usual number of ignorant or careless constructions On the east front he added a portico, of which the cornice is on a level with the tops of the battlements and the balustrade clear above them An alarming departure from the upright has not lessened the incongruity of this Doric afterthought

Between news of the Opera House and attempts to secure Nicolini for the winter, Vanbrugh would reveal his theory of architecture in these typical comments It was a time of much activity Carlisle had won £2,000 "of the Sharpers" and had gone down to Yorkshire to spend it on his estate Coleman was so useful at Kimbolton that "If we had Such a Man at Blenheim he'd Save us a Thousand pounds a Year" Nevertheless Blenheim would be finished in two summers, and in a memorable hour the Duchess had said she would live to beg his pardon for ever having quarrelled with him—this after her visit to the site Vanbrugh was quite certain they would all, even the Tories, admire his masterpiece in the end

I met John Coniers there on thursday last, with Several Virtuoso's with him, He made mighty fine Speeches Upon the Building, And took it for granted No Subjects house in Europe wou'd Approach it which will be true, if the Duke of Shrewsbury judges right in Saying there is not in Italy so fine a House as Chatterworth, for this of Blenheim is beyond all Comparison more Magnificent than that My Ld Carlisle has got his whole Garden Front up And is fonder of his Work every day than Other The Duke of Shrewsbury's house¹ will be About half up this Season, My Ld Bindon is busy to the Utmost of his Force in New Moulding Audley end, And All the World are running Mad after Building, as far as they can reach

¹ Heythrop Designed by Thomas Archer, Vanbrugh's imitator

But unfortunately the Opera House, one symptom of the mania, had proved to be rather further than he himself could reach. His money had vanished in its echoing walls and left a formidable array of creditors, growing daily more threatening. Reputation and position would not save him from the same debtor's prison that had entertained poor Wycherley. There was only one friend to whom he could appeal with dignity, the man for whom he had designed the greatest house in England without, as yet, any reward—for it was understood that so mighty a patron could not fail to make it uncommonly worth his while in the end, judging by the fruits of such a comparatively provincial undertaking as Castle Howard. He therefore in the Duke's absence tentatively appealed to the Duchess, and was finally constrained to write the following letter to Arthur Mainwaring, her agent and his friend.

I am now at Blenheim, but under such uneasiness, that I'm scarce fit for Service now, having only a Short Reprieve from what I expected would have immediately fallen upon me. I must therefore before it be too late, make One Application, more Which I hope My Lady Duchess will think so Moderate, that she will desire My Lord Treasurer to Allow it. Which is that for the time past, and to come, (till something can be had by way of a place, which she has been pleas'd to promise me her Assistance in) My Lord wou'd order me upon the Queens Account, but what he did to Mr Boulter.

But Mainwaring was worse than useless. Though professing to be sorry for Vanbrugh, he told the Duchess, "I cannot advise you to do anything for him out of your own estate."

There is no doubt that at this time the Duke's reluctance to help him was well meant. "It is more for his

interest to have patience till something happens which may be lasting," he wrote. But Vanbrugh certainly never imagined that by accepting a mere £400 a year at once, he would forfeit all chance of a proper recompense later on. It was a trifle stingy in a man so immensely rich to frame alternatives for a friend on the edge of bankruptcy. After further appeals, Vanbrugh did get his salary—and that was all he got. The something lasting never materialised. It was a mirage that vanished in the dust of litigation.

Probably the Duchess herself was not deeply moved by his plight. At best they had kept a very unsteady kind of peace which was really no more than a truce, and suddenly hostilities broke out again. Vanbrugh's presence was constantly needed at Blenheim, for as at St Paul's and Greenwich Hospital, the shape of the building was modified as it grew. After several years, for example, he was still writing of the south front "as it is now determined," for by then the house had been "rais'd about six feet higher in the principal parts of it." Thus he was compelled to find a lodging, indeed a temporary home, near-by, and there was one building that stood most conveniently near—old Woodstock Manor. So without a word to his employers he ordered part of the ruins to be repaired, and a roof was put on in March, 1708. The discovery of this enraged the Duchess more than anything he had yet done. He was at last proved to be abusing his powers, and she flatly accused him to Godolphin of spending £3,000 of the Queen's money on repairing for his own use a hideous ruin which she and her husband always intended to destroy, and which in fact she now *ordered* to be destroyed.

Vanbrugh defended himself bravely to the Treasurer

It was not £3,000 that he had spent, it was not even £1,100. Moreover to tidy up the Manor and keep it as a pleasant and romantic feature full in view of the house was by £1,000 the cheapest way to deal with the opposite hillside. Before it was too late, he would bring him a little picture he was making of the place, "& hope in the mean time it wou'd be possible that the pains I take in this particular shou'd [not] be thought to proceed only from a desire of providing my self an agreeable Lodging, I do assure your Lordship that I have acted in this whole business upon a much more generous principle and am much discourag'd to find I can be suspected of so poor a contrivance for so worthless a thing." The letter was forwarded to the Duchess and received in after years a typical endorsement.

All that Sir J. V. says in this letter is false. The Manor house had cost near £3,000 & was ordered to be pulled down & the materials made use of for things that were necessary to be done. The picture he drew to prevent this, was false. My Lord Treasurer went to Blenheim, to see the Work all he had represented of it, was false, & is now ordered to be pulled down.

It cannot be denied that Vanbrugh had an "interest" in the Manor House—he was looking forward to living in it. At the same time he could only do that as long as Blenheim was being built, and no one but the Duchess believed that he was really trying to delay the completion of his grandest and dearest design, with all the glory and advancement it would surely bring. There is no doubt that he was perfectly frank in saying that he acted "upon a much more generous principle." he loved old Woodstock Palace both as a monument of great historical interest and as a picturesque ornament in a rather

empty park, "One of the Most Agreeable Objects that the best of Landskip Painters can invent" In a final effort to save it, in June, 1709, not for himself, nor even for the insensitive Marlboroughs, but for posterity, he expressed these views in a paper called *Reasons Offer'd for Preserving some Part of the Old Manor*, which is such a remarkable document for the age, that I have reproduced it in full as Appendix III Except Hawksmoor, there was not another architect in England who would have pleaded so warmly for a rambling ruinous building without any architectural merit at all to contemporary eyes

Vanbrugh was undoubtedly a pioneer, and perhaps the first great artist that we can definitely associate with the Romantic movement in architecture, for although he never designed a pointed arch, he had greater respect for the mediæval than Wren, and was more in sympathy with it He would never have said that "Gothick Butteresses are all ill-favoured"

There was a further proof of this in 1719 when it was first proposed to pull down the Holbein Gate in Whitehall, just south of the Banqueting House, to broaden the roadway for coaches Vanbrugh protested strongly against "destroying One of the Greatest Curiosities there is in London as that Gate has ever been esteem'd, and cost a great sum of money the Building, And so well perform'd that altho' now above 200 Yrs Old, is as entire as the first day," and he proposed continuing the road through the Privy Garden to one side¹ He had ample opportunity for studying the tall gate building

¹ His protest seems to have had effect, for the Gate was not demolished until 1759 And then, when it was too late, his plan was adopted and Whitehall began to assume its modern shape

with the four towers portrayed by Canaletto, for he could hardly walk away from his front door in Scotland Yard without seeing it. He even said with characteristic generosity, "I wou'd give as much money for it, as the making a way through the Garden wou'd come to, and so put the King to no expense at all." Had there been more men of his discernment and altruism, the eighteenth century would have been less loathed by the nineteenth, and two interesting monuments, one of great dignity for London, might have been spared until to-day. But his paper on the Manor reached contemptuous eyes. "Something ridiculous in it to preserve the house for himself," was the Duchess's comment.

Yet though the Manor House had been finally condemned by Godolphin, whose total ignorance of art was congenial to the Duchess, it was only in the most dilatory way that Vanbrugh set about destroying his cherished ruin. In fact he quietly continued to do the opposite. He put on a few men to make a show of house-breaking, while others in another part were fitting up habitable rooms.

Seven years passed, in which the Marlboroughs were occupied with bigger problems than the fate of Woodstock Manor, and then, writing to Vanbrugh one day, the Duchess happened to offer him the use of a Lodge in the Park. This was the reply she received:

I am obliged to your Grace for the offer you are pleas'd to make me of the Lodge. But I thought you had known I was remov'd three Years ago into the old Manor. This place being near the Works and the Town, is much more convenient than any other and very pleasant too, altho in the middle of Rubbish. I shan't ask your Grace however to be at any expense about it either without or within, not desiring one Inch of Wanscot, and the Walls, Floors,

and Roof are firm But if your Grace has any reason against my being there I'll remove

A more injudicious letter could hardly have been written To say that he had been living for three years without her knowledge "and very pleasant too" in a house she had ordered to be pulled down as long ago as seven, and then to add amiably that he did not expect her to pay for making it habitable, was enough to ignite a far less inflammable spirit Had his tone been sincere it would merely have indicated simplicity, but it became almost offensive when he betrayed in his last sentence that he knew very well what she would say She pounced on that sentence If he supposed she would object to his moving there, why had he? And Vanbrugh could only offer lame explanations

And still he clung to the Manor, while the Duchess waited, ready to pounce again at the least sign of activity "I desire your Grace will believe me that I have no underhand projects or fancies of my own to execute" It was unfortunate then that once more he "set three or four men to work, to do some little necessary things" and forgot to tell her he was paying for it himself! The inevitable letters followed, the one accusing, the other protesting innocence But next time the Duchess declared him extravagant, he mischievously replied, "I will have the homely simplicity of the Ancient Manor in my constant thoughts, for a guide in what remains to be done in all the inferior buildings" However, in the end it had to come down, and a featureless park, that few would want in exchange for Castle Howard's, proves to this day how right the architect was

Many bitter and foolish deeds tarnish the memory, as

they troubled the life, of Sarah Churchill, but she was a great woman, and at heart a good one. Since the days when she had made trial of him in the Stuart court, this beautiful impetuous creature had adored her equally beautiful husband with unwavering loyalty. She had climbed with him into glory, and now that he was a demigod their marriage had become the most famous love-match in England. She ruled him of course, as she ruled everybody, including the Queen. The one field of activity in which she had no sway was the field of battle. To the mortification of Vanbrugh and a hundred other Englishmen the Duke of Marlborough never allowed his Duchess to accompany him on the campaigns.

But would it in fact have been safe to have left Vanbrugh alone to his own devices, his own tremendous devices? Great architects are notoriously lax and irresponsible. There is so much more in them of the artist than the business-man that they brush economy aside in their mad desire to attain beauty. I do not question Vanbrugh's honesty. His vehemence against corruption had mildly amazed the imperturbable Wren. He almost worshipped the Duke, and in 1709 he may still have admired the Duchess. As for Blenheim, he said "I cannot help looking on this Building with ye tenderness of a sort of Child of my Owne," and his great longing was to see it finished (which he never did). But his very devotion to the Duke and his lofty conception of a monument to his glory made him a dangerous man to leave unwatched, not less because he failed to see where the difficulties arose. He had made his designs and been praised for them. He was merely trying to carry them out as quickly and cheaply as he could. The charge of extravagance offended him.

There is not one part of it, that I don't weight and Consider a hundred times, before tis put in Execution, And this with two ends, one of trying to do it better, And tother of giving it Some other turn that may be as well and yet Come *Cheaper* And tis this that makes me when I am here, Avoid all Company, And haunt the Building like a Ghost, from the Time the Workmen leave off at Six a Clock, till tis quite Dark And I do assure you, that this more than Common thought About it, has plentifully had the Saving Effect I have propos'd, For I have daily by it, hit upon things, that have Spar'd great Sums of Money

That may have been so, but the fact remained that a great deal had been spent already, the Duchess was losing, indeed had lost, her hold on the Queen, the war continued, the arrears were mounting up, and before long a hard-pressed Treasury might cease to make payments at all Thus an extra £100 to the stone-carters in bad weather might seem as important to the Duchess as it seemed unimportant to Vanbrugh Yet in general no judgment can be passed on these immortal quarrellers, since beauty cannot be valued in a court of law Consider one item alone over which they quarrelled The bridge at Blenheim carries the roadway level from one hill to another at a height of some forty feet above the surface of the lake It has four pavilions containing large rooms and a central span of 101 feet,

Thro' which the Danube might collected pour
His Spacious Urn

Even as it stands, incomplete, it is a magnificent spectacle in stone Is it necessary? To Vanbrugh it was To the Duchess it was fantastically unnecessary But was any grandeur necessary? The martial symbolism, the statuary, the trophies, the towers and colonnades, were

any of these necessary? Between a mistress who wanted simply a comfortable house soon built and an architect who thought rightly he had been asked to design a monument, there was unavoidable discord

Perhaps Vanbrugh cannot be blamed for failing to appreciate the sad plight of the Duchess, though he certainly followed with the rest of society her decline from favour and the rise of Abigail Hill. Already in 1708 he had written of the Duchess, "She is very much at Court, and mighty well there, but the Q's fondness of tother Lady is not to be express'd." Even then a great friendship was dying. In the simpler days of William and Mary, Anne, the unfavoured sister, had doted on her strong, irrepressible friend, called her "Mrs Freeman" and been called in return "Mrs Morley." When she became Queen, for a period of time while Marlborough was adding *Ramilles* to *Blenheim*, that friendship stood still at its absolute meridian. Anne ruled England and the Duchess ruled Anne. And then came Abigail Hill, soon to be Abigail Masham, the insignificant cousin whom Mrs Freeman herself had introduced to Court, quietly stealing away the Queen's affection. The serpent had entered paradise. Like a jealous lover, Mrs Freeman took the one line certain to hasten her fall. She stormed, she wrote letters full of violent accusation, she brow-beat poor, weak, pig-headed Mrs Morley—and the dough-like gentleness of Abigail Masham seemed all the gentler. A public thanksgiving for *Oudenarde* was held in the new Cathedral. The two great ladies rolled along in the state coach side by side, to honour the husband of the one and the servant of the other, and not a citizen on Ludgate Hill imagined the bitter words that were passing between them, or how, on the very

steps of St Paul's, the Duchess commanded the Queen to hold her tongue!

Meanwhile Harley was making use of Mrs Masham to fill the head of that Stuart queen with Tory propaganda. And behind the moderate Harley lurked the Jacobite shadow. With the Queen's confidence gone, and hostile politicians rising up, the foundations of the Duchess's world seemed to tremble beneath her. And this was the hour in which Vanbrugh cheerfully explained that although the original estimate had been exceeded by £34,000 already, that estimate had been made for the house alone. The cost of the other parts "I suppose nobody cou'd Imagine cou'd come to less than as much more." And these were the very works that she had all along condemned as mad extravagance! "And I believe," he blundered on with remarkably unfortunate emphasis, "when the whole is done, *Both the Queen, Yourself and everybody* (except your personall Enemys) will easlyer forgive me laying out fifty thousand pounds too Much, than if I had lay'd out a hundred thousand too little." There are some situations in which good nature is not enough.

Ceaseless recrimination at last froze up whatever warmth remained in the Queen's heart. "I desire nothing," she wrote to Marlborough, "but that she will leave off teasing and tormenting me and behave herself with the decency she ought both to her friend and Queen." And to the Duchess "It is impossible for you to recover my former kindness." Then at the final interview, like other profoundly stupid people, she took refuge in a phrase, repeating again and again, "You desired no answer and you shall have none." It had the effect she wanted, for at last the Duchess broke down and cried

It was a pathetic woman who stood there struggling with a last appeal, as the Queen turned away and went out of the door, never to see her again

The Duchess did not remain pathetic for many minutes. She returned to the country, quite undaunted in spirit, to plague her architect with renewed gusto. Indeed he had hardly tasted the wormwood of her enmity yet, and she, too, she was only beginning to taste the bitterness of fortune.

A report of the rupture at Kensington no doubt came quickly to Vanbrugh, who was in London during that April of 1710. He had two houses now, both designed by himself, and both very small—one in Whitehall, not far from the Office of Works, the other at Esher. There in the delectable countryside that was Surrey, he had just, in the language of the century, "fitted up a very small box," or in other words, built himself a little retreat from town. The site was remarkably beautiful, chosen with his never-failing sense of landscape. One can see him already imagining the adornments he would one day give it—when Blenheim had made him a rich man—a belvedere on the knoll behind the house, pools and terraces and avenues, ornaments not to do violence but to emphasise what what was already there. But for himself he never made them. Within a few years he sold the property to the future Duke of Newcastle and for him developed it until the gardens of Claremont were almost as famous as the gardens of Stowe. His own small house of brick was then absorbed into the larger one. He had chosen Esher partly, no doubt, for the sake of his mother, who was still living at Claygate in the next parish, close to the Imber Court of her childhood, eighty years

before She was now a very old lady who had lived to prove that bringing nineteen children into the world in twenty-one years does not necessarily prevent one's having a fair view of it oneself She died in August, 1711, and he buried her in Thames Ditton church

Although by then Vanbrugh had been living in his Whitehall house for many years, it is not unfitting to mention it in this chapter, for there, too, in a small way, even as at Kimbolton and Woodstock, he had been dealing with historic materials It will be remembered that the collection of buildings which composed the ancient palace of Whitehall had been burnt to the ground in 1698, and that next year King William had given Vanbrugh permission to make himself a house out of the ruins The site, in a quiet corner of Scotland Yard, was rather a charming one, with (presently) an excellent view of St Paul's dome immediately above the curving river But Vanbrugh was never successful at designing small houses, and when this curious crenellated object arose,¹ it amused people that so puny a phoenix had risen from so vast a holocaust, none more than Jonathan Swift Now Swift had no personal grudge against Vanbrugh, though he probably thought him at this time a pretentious fellow who had pushed his way into architecture and heraldry with equal insolence But he was a Whig, and he had vilely insulted the Church That was enough That made him fair game for the cruellest wit between Dryden and Pope.

Swift's reply to Sir John Brute was a poem called "Van's House" In a handful of pages he did what Collier had been unable to do in a hundred,—he made his victim wince Not content, he followed it up two

¹ See Appendix I, p 297

years later with "The History of Vanbrugh's House" These witty and delightful poems will be found in Appendix IV They circulated freely in London and created a great deal of merriment at the time, especially among the Tories Vanbrugh did not take it at all well His dignity was ruffled But it was really enraging when the Duchess of Marlborough took to quoting the rhymes at him, which she did, we may be sure, with delight Vanbrugh considered that Swift was no friend of his, but he seems to have been wise enough not to try conclusions with such an opponent On the 31st of October of this year, 1710, Swift reported to Stella,

I dined to-day at Sir Richard Temple's with Congreve, Vanbrugh, Lieutenant general Farington etc Vanbrugh, I believe I told you, had a long quarrel with me about those verses on his house, but we were very civil and cold Lady Marlborough used to tease him with them, which made him angry, though he be a good-natured fellow

Swift bore no malice, and there would come a time when he would be sorry for his unkindness In their joint Preface to the *Miscellanies* of 1727 he and Pope declared

In Regard to Two Persons only we wish our Railery, though ever so tender, or Resentment, though ever so just, had not been indulged We speak of Sir John Vanbrugh, who was a Man of Wit, and of Honour, and of Mr Addison, whose Name deserves all Respect from every Lover of Learning

Chapter Eleven

DECLINE

*'Twould be very hard we should be yet undone by the Meer Tory
Mob, Ignorant, furious country Priests, and Stupid Justices.*

VANBRUGH TO THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

THE discomfiture of the Whigs had begun while the ministrations of Abigail Masham were bringing to the surface all that was Stuart and secretly Jacobite in the Queen; and within two months of the painful episode at Kensington, she aimed a second blow at the Marlboroughs by dismissing their son-in-law, Sunderland, the hottest Whig of all. Such news could only have a profoundly disturbing effect at Blenheim. Forging ahead until they had nearly finished the shell of the building, the workmen had allowed the Treasury to drop far behind in payments, confident that arrears were safe as long as the two great ladies were bosom friends and the government scarcely more than a family concern. That confidence had been shaken in a few weeks; but if it were destroyed altogether, if they became convinced that their money was in danger, or would not be paid them in a very short while, the likelihood of these poor men continuing to give credit to a hostile Treasury was not great. Alarmed by the growing spirit of unrest, Vanbrugh wrote to the Duchess asking her to confirm in writing only what he had often heard her say, that whatever happened the workmen should not suffer. She wondered if he was really simple enough to imagine that she would commit the Duke in that way, and at such a time.

On the 7th of August, 1710, the Queen dismissed Godolphin, at once the most brilliant and honourable of Treasurers. The leading Whigs resigned shortly afterwards, and the Tories came into power under Harley and St John. It was no longer possible for Vanbrugh to fob off the contractors with promises. "Seeing me totally disappointed on all sides, there is nothing but money will satisfy 'em, of which I have none to give 'em." But the Marlboroughs were more careful than ever not to commit themselves, for they knew the Tories would be only too glad to escape the responsibility for Blenheim. "It is our best way not to give orders, but to let the Treasury give what orders they please, either for its going on, or its standing still. It in no way becomes you or me to be giving orders for the Queen's money. We must meddle as little as possible." Such was the opinion of the Duke, many times repeated from abroad. And he said,

I also beg of you to let Mr Maynwaring know that I beg the favour of him to manage Vanbrugh so that he may not be angry, for that would be a pleasure to those that wish us ill. Upon the whole we live in a very disagreeable age, in which we must expect no favour.

But Vanbrugh was more worried than angry. Still hoping for a definite promise from the Tories, he stayed in Whitehall and daily put off the unpleasant task of confronting the workmen at Blenheim. When at last he arrived, "finding things here on the point of falling into a Distraction not to be express'd, from the Great Arrears due to a vast Number of poor familys," he sent off two letters on the same day, one to the new Treasurer, Lord Poulett, with a stirring account of the origin of the

house, the other to Harley himself, urging the absolute necessity of some payment, however small, merely to finish off what had been done that summer. It was three days after this, on the 3rd of October, that Joynes and Bobart (who had succeeded Boulter) told him they had received an order from the Duchess to stop all work at once, and not to employ one man for a single day more.

At this Vanbrugh went off into a great disquisition. He said that a week or ten days would complete the covering in and making safe without it, the whole summer's work would be exposed to "unspeakable mischiefs." He said that the contractors might understand they would lose nothing in the end, but the labourers, many of whom were in debt for their lodgings and had families in distant parts of the country to support, "finding themselves disbanded in so Surprising a Manner without a farthing, wou'd certainly conclude their Money lost." They would hold a meeting—there were enemies not far off to encourage them—and they would proceed to attack the house. Already, he said, they were only just kept from rebellion by promises of money renewed from day to day. At this point Bobart and Joynes, who had listened in uncomfortable silence, cut him short by displaying a postscript in the Duchess's letter. She forbade them to pay any attention to Vanbrugh whatever he might say or do.

He did what alone was dignified—left at once for London—but paused at Oxford to send a letter to the Duke. "I shall notwithstanding all this cruel usage from the Duchess of Marlborough receive and with pleasure Obey Any Command Your Grace will please to lay upon me."

But the position was not quite as bad as it seemed, for

the Tories did not really look forward to the odium of ruining the Queen's gift, and next day Travers of the Treasury went down and at once on his own credit ordered £500 to be paid to the men, who were making an ugly scene after the lock-out, but had not yet resorted to violence. Returning to London, he asked Vanbrugh how much was absolutely necessary to roof and secure Blenheim against the winter. £8,000 he was told, and £7,000 was despatched immediately. Two days later Harley assured Vanbrugh that he would take care of the building.

So the fortunes of Blenheim varied month by month, and sometimes day by day. By October, 1710, £200,000 had been spent, £30,000 was still owing to the workmen, and for another £30,000 Vanbrugh "durst almost undertake" to complete the whole scheme. That seemed honest enough. After all, it was only £27,000 short of his estimate eight months later. "I made Mr Vanbrugh my enemy by the constant disputes I had with him to prevent his extravagance," said the Duchess. But long before that, each had learnt that the other was never in the wrong. Few artists can have had more confidence than Vanbrugh—

Whate'er I devise
Seems good in my eyes—

and the reader will have discovered by now that he devised no building that was not the noblest, most convenient, yes and cheapest of its kind in the world. And yet he was not an arrogant man. In a tolerant hour the Duchess thought kindly of his character. She would like to make an end of their quarrels. Yet even so the gesture of friendship could never be more than a half-gesture.

With rather pathetic honesty she said,

It is extreamly obliging of you to write so warmly, and shew so much concern to make the Building be soon finish'd, the Account you give of it is very agreeable, and I desire you won't imply because I have not been able to serve you, while you were wanted, that I shou'd be more careless if the business were over, for though you have vex'd me extreamly, in forcing me to things against my Inclination, yet I shall always think myself oblig'd to you, and will always be endeavouring to be out of your Debt, because I know, that what I did not like, as well as what I did approve of, you intended for the best And tho' it is said that in this World there is no perfection, you are not the only Architect that thinks 'tis impossible they can err, I believe it is the opinion of all that Science, which makes it more reasonable for me to forgive you, and I hope you will do the same to your humble Servant,

S Marlborough

For the time being calamity had been staved off, but at the end of 1710 it threatened from another side Fat, simple-faced John Anstis asked the Queen for the reversion of the office of Garter, which Vanbrugh as next in rank was full of hope would revert to himself And Gregory King hoped so too, for then at last he might move up into Clarenceux Moreover, Anstis, though profoundly well read in heraldry, was not an amiable fellow at all He kept two books from the College library for six months, and when at last they were politely sent for, declared that the College had never possessed a library The books belonged to the Earl Marshal, and he flatly refused to give them back, saying that "the Office was made up of a Parcell of Knaves and Fools, and the Knaves had sent the Fools on their Errand That when he should be Garter, which would be shortly in spite of all their teeth, he would make them all

stink " The college moaned in anticipation, and Gregory King cried to Lord Oxford—for he was Mr Harley no longer—"There being only the Two Places of Garter and Clar^x of any tolerable profit, what a Discouragement must it be to Learning and Industry in our Faculty, to have those places always filled up with Strangers when some of our Society have spent the Prime of their days in qualifying themselves " It was hard lines But though the post was promised to Vanbrugh for the time being, King would never admire himself in the robes of Clarenceux, for in less than two years he was dead

With the future of Blenheim still very uncertain, it was fortunate for Vanbrugh that other work was coming his way About this time (1710-1711) he designed Kings Weston in Gloucestershire for Sir Edward Southwell The situation was spectacular, a hilltop above Avonmouth on which a Tudor house had been built with a view beneath it extending from the Mendips and the wooded gorge of the Avon, across the Bristol Channel to the Welsh hills, and beyond to the mountains But the Elizabethans were not moved by panoramas "I finde vaste and indefinite viewes which drowne all apprehension of the uttermost Obiects, condemned by good authors," wrote Sir Henry Wotton, and for more than a century Kings Weston turned an untidy back on the sea captains from New England Then Vanbrugh looked at the view with eighteenth century eyes He demolished and rebuilt the house where it stood, but moved the offices round to one side and arranged a suite of rooms to overlook Wales

He designed the building, I feel sure, to be seen from the higher levels of the park in perspective against an

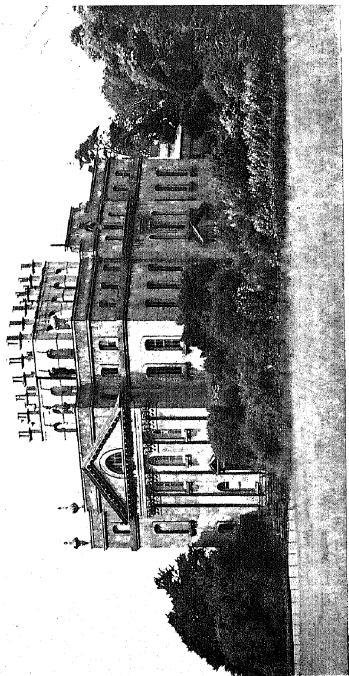
immensity of water and mountains—the Enchanted Castle of Claude But Southwell was a man of limited means, so Vanbrugh allowed himself only two devices to gain that romantic effect one, a Corinthian frontispiece, the other, a gathering of all the chimneys in the house to form a continuous arcade against the sky, in the shape of a square It is the best of his bold inventions because the simplest Nothing was required but the courage to raise twenty stacks as many feet in the air and loop them together with arches, for there is no more attempt to disguise than to adorn them In so doing he was the last considerable architect for many years to make an intelligent use of chimneys The Palladians, day-dreaming of Vicenza or Ancient Rome, huddled them away behind their parapets, wishing that the “master” had left them adequate instructions

Maturity of limes and chestnuts has given Kings Weston another nobility, but otherwise it is much as Vanbrugh left it, “a resolute house, emphatic as an oath,” to steal an image from George Moore Industry, it is true, extends a hand across the landscape just as at Seaton Delaval, yet with this difference, that where the chimneys of Blyth seem now to add poignancy to that ruin in the north, the chimneys of Avonmouth add nothing to the buttercup meadows and pale outline of the Sugar Loaf Soon Southwell had one of the famous seats of the West Country In the second part of the century it was the panorama that took away the breath of romantic visitors, like the Prince de Ligne, but in the first part at least as many fine words were expended on the house ¹

¹ It is interesting to note that Edward Gibbon came to stay in 1750, when he was thirteen, and reported “I like the Place Prodigiously Kings Weston is a Most Grand House”

Wherever Vanbrugh built, his genius impregnated the neighbourhood Duncombe and Gilling are seedlings from Castle Howard, Shotover and Britwell, from Blenheim And Kings Weston, though the smallest of his authenticated mansions, appears to have founded quite a local 'school'

There is preserved in the house a leather-bound book entitled "Designs by Sir John Vanbrugh " Unfortunately it is improbable that any of these drawings were actually made by him, for they are not in his impressionistic style Some are by Townsend, whom he brought over from Blenheim to be master mason, others are by a Mr Price of Wandsworth who was clearly a disciple, and others are probably by Sir Edward Southwell, who became an amateur architect himself in the excitement of rebuilding his house But there is no doubt that many of the schemes delineated are Vanbrugh's own, as some are definitely stated to be There is an arch forty feet high and crowned with a pyramid with which he proposed to adorn a forecourt at Kings Weston There is a "Draught of a Chimney at Sr John Vanbrughs" (meaning his own house), and several other bold and typical chimneypieces But perhaps even more interesting are a number of designs for little buildings that can be ascribed to "Mr Price," of whom nothing is known but that he made a first scheme for the stables in 1720 In these curious ale-houses and cottages and nameless towered and chimneyed structures the typical Vanbrugh features appear—bull's-eye windows and massive architraves, machicolated turrets, domes and pediments—but on the most diminutive scale It is an attempt to apply his principles to small buildings, a century before the style of the "picturesque cottage" was invented Of



KINGS WESTON, the Entrance Front from the south-east.

course the most freakish designs were never executed, yet buildings of the type may still be found in the neighbourhood of Blenheim, Seaton Delaval and Eastbury, and it is possible that Vanbrugh himself may have designed some of them, for it is recorded that on the Blenheim estate there was built, "according to the design given by Sir John Vanbrugh, a Cottage House upon a bit of waste ground taken out of the Highway, for which the Mans Rent was only two Chickens a year "

However, the Kings Weston book also contains houses of a grander sort, and it is very likely that Southwell himself was the author of these. On one of them is written "1717 Project of a House for Charleton in Somersetsh Wheedon Down by Priors Wood " With its tall pair of ached chimneystacks, it is quite obviously derived from the first design for Eastbury, published in *Vitruvius Britannicus* that year. But the best surviving example of the school is a neighbouring house we do not find in the book—Frampton Court in Gloucestershire, whose small delightful front is only a little too feminine and too weak to have been designed by Vanbrugh. But his it could not be in any case, for it was not begun until five years after his death.

1711 was the year of his last design for a central chapel at Greenwich Hospital, and it was also the year in which the Commission for the Fifty Churches ordered by Queen Anne (of which body he was a member) began to rebuild the parish church nearby. This building has been ascribed to Hawksmoor alone,¹ but it is open to question whether the simple power of its Doric order and the originality of its plan did not issue from a bolder

¹ Not the upper part of the tower, which was added by John James of Greenwich

imagination. If so, it would seem to be Vanbrugh's one design for a church. It is of course quite possible that he provided no more than a sketch, leaving to Hawksmoor the detailed elevations.

That might be the arrangement that in the same year evolved the old Clarendon Press at Oxford. In the Clarke collection at Worcester College, there are a number of suggestions for the building, three of which are most probably Vanbrugh's own, washed in by himself with the characteristically bold and skilful technique. One is clearly a first draft of the design that was executed, but that, too, appears, and is stated, to be "by Mr Hawksmoor." So it may be that Hawksmoor's work is to be found in the difference between the two, and this is the more likely since only in the executed design are the windows sunk in panels like those in his own quadrangle at Queen's. Considering the nearness of Blenheim and its national fame, it may seem curious that the town contains so little of Vanbrugh's work.¹ But the explanation is not hard to find. Dean Aldrich and George Clarke were the arbiters of Oxford taste and very accomplished architects themselves, very scholarly and critical men. Whether he was too undisciplined for those amateur Palladians we can only guess,—he was certainly too Whig for that citadel of Tories.

In 1705 the estimate for Blenheim had been £100,000 by 1711 twice as much had been received, and on the 15th of June, Vanbrugh was sent by the Duke to present Lord Oxford with another estimate. It was an anxious moment, for he required a further £87,000 from this Tory government, making a total expenditure of

¹ See Appendix I, p. 299

£287,000—"A large Sum for a house, but a poor reward for the services that occasioned the Building it"¹ Lord Oxford was surprisingly amenable. He actually appeared to be relieved. He promised £20,000 at once, and a further supply as soon as possible. Afterwards Vanbrugh was told that the estimate was "vastly less than he had been inform'd it would be."

But meanwhile the Duchess accelerated steeply on her downward course. Submitted to the rennet of jealousy, her milk of human kindness had curdled. It had become a firm junket of hatred. While journalists on either side conducted an open war of libel, she herself was meanly threatening to publish Anne's damaging letters of the previous reign. At last in January she had been dismissed from all her Court appointments and only the pleading of his friends prevented Marlborough resigning from the leadership of the Allied armies at once. Thus the fate of dynasties hung on the manœuvres of two silly women, while pettiness followed pettiness through the spring. Just before Harley promised the £20,000 for Blenheim, the Duchess had been asked, not too politely, to leave her apartments at St. James's. She left them—stripped of every object she had brought there, including the locks on the doors. Queen Anne herself inspected the outraged panels. She vowed she would not build Marlborough's house when his wife was ruining hers, and she refused to sign the warrant. Later she thought that that was not very dignified. But it was August before the money began to arrive in weekly instalments of £1,000 each. Then, of course, the workmen could have claimed

¹ And in fact £300,000 were spent in all, or nearly four times as much as by Carlisle on Castle Howard. For his whole scheme from 1700-1738 cost less than £80,000, though it must be added that quite a third of the house was still unbuilt at his death. In 1711 he had not spent as much as £30,000.

the whole £20,000, for they would still have been owed as much again. But they were simple men with faith in the word of monarchs and ministers, they did not press for payment of past debts. They agreed that the money should be entirely laid out on new work, and for once there was more than enough to finish the building season.

But in all this Oxford was only preparing for his final blow. By forwarding the work at Blenheim he adroitly removed one source of popular sympathy with the Marlboroughs, and showed himself to the world impartial and public-spirited. "This is heaping coals of fire on their heads," wrote a friend. And even while Marlborough was brilliantly outflanking the French at Bouchain for a march on Paris, Oxford and St John were negotiating a peace by which the vainglorious expectation of years became a day-dream. That winter, returning to England, the Duke found himself accused of embezzlement, and on the 31st of December, 1711, the Queen herself dismissed him from all his posts, and from the leadership of an unconquered army. For once giving way to an impulse, he threw the letter into the fire. On the following 1st of June, Blenheim was abandoned indefinitely by the Queen's command, to remain in Vanbrugh's words "a monument of ingratitude."

The Marlboroughs passed the summer of 1712 very quietly at Holywell House, St Albans, looking after the dying Godolphin, and visited by their friends. It was a hot summer, and the Duke had his tent pitched beside the winding Ver. At first he considered finishing Blenheim himself, and even asked Vanbrugh to estimate for the year's work. But the Duchess strongly objected, for though he was rich enough at the moment,

and safe, it was impossible to say what disasters the future might not hold. In September Godolphin died, and the Duke walked beside him to the Abbey. With bereavement and persecution, England had become intolerable to live in. He asked Vanbrugh to witness a new will in November, and a fortnight later went abroad, to be followed into exile, in a month or so, by Sarah.

Chapter Twelve

THE PRICE OF ALLEGIANCE

'Tis *GEORGE* and *LIBERTY* that crowns the cup,
And *Zeal* for that great House which eats him up.

POPE

IT seemed that the Marlboroughs had been swept out of England on a torrent of abuse. While St. John openly called the Duchess "a fury" and "the worst of her sex," the *New Atalantis* credited her with a surprising promiscuity. While the *Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* sold in thousands, ballads of libellous doggerel issued almost daily from the Tory press. Other ballads, it is true, were not allowing Lady Masham to forget that she began as Abigail Hill—

Whenas Q—— A—— of great renown
Great Britain's sceptre sway'd,
Besides the Church she dearly lov'd
A Dirty Chamber-Maid.

But that was poor consolation. Vanbrugh witnessed the catastrophe with the alarm of a Whig, the despair of an architect, and the indignation of a friend. For eight years the Duke had been his idol, the greatest of Englishmen, and as delightful as he was great. The wild enormities of Blenheim had been no commissioned compliment, they were the poetry of a genuine and personal hero-worship. As for Sarah, she was exasperating, but not a complete enemy, and it is certain that their common humiliation aroused in him nothing but sympathy.

Now it was good to give vent to those emotions in a

Whig tavern, but Vanbrugh did not care to choose his audience. On the 25th of January, 1713, he wrote to the Mayor of Woodstock about improvements in the town. It was a pet theme, and at last before leaving England the Duke had told him "to take some care of it." One sentence stood out in the letter

I several times spoke to my Lord Duke about paving the market-place, which he seemed well inclined to, and I believe had done ere now but for the continual *plague and bitter persecution he has most barbarously been followed with* for two years past

It was ironical that an innocent remark inspired purely by loyalty should be his downfall. The same day a score of letters from eminent men must have been crossing the countryside, full of real invective against the government. Only Vanbrugh's reached enemy hands. For Oxford was full of Tories, like Hearne, the sour antiquary, who despised Blenheim and wanted to see its Whiggish architect thrown out with his clients. Unfortunately for them the Comptroller of Works was not easy to implicate politically. Had he lain low and minded nothing but his own business—and no more was required of him—it is possible that he would have survived the Tory purge under Anne's protection. But it was not difficult to construe the remark as an attack on her by one of her own servants. The letter was forwarded to Lord Oxford, and soon the Queen herself was enraged. It was time this uppish pawn disappeared with the great pieces, and shortly afterwards Vanbrugh received his dismissal from the Office of Works.

The blow was more grievous, relatively, than that which the Marlboroughs had suffered, for he was a poor man with few resources. He had abandoned the

promotion of Opera, the management of a theatre, and play-writing itself, to give his whole attention to architecture—and his chief credentials had gone, with half his income. It was not certain that other Whig patrons would entrust him with their houses, and if the Pretender came in there might be no Whig patrons left. A hollow Blenheim would remain his ridiculous monument. What made the glee of the Tories more humiliating was the memory of his cheerful postscript to the Mayor—"I have lately received some very good hopes that the Treasury will pay the Blenheim debt. If it be resolved to pay the debt I don't doubt but the Building will go on again, and my Lord Duke return to inhabit it." On the 24th of March, 1713, the letter, and the postscript, appeared in *The Post Boy* with this comment:

The Gentleman who writ the following letter to the Mayor of Woodstock, having met with the chastisement he deserves for it, 'tis to be hoped those, who by the extreme lenity of the present Administration, are yet suffered to enjoy these offices they obtained under another, will take warning, and keep themselves within the bounds they ought

The dismissal was not to take place until the 15th of April, but at once there was a scramble among the patrons to secure the vacancy in advance. The one-eyed Duke of Shrewsbury had recently built Heythrop in Oxfordshire from the design of an architect he had discovered, called Thomas Archer. Vanbrugh was interested in this local work, advancing month by month with Blenheim, and often reported on its progress, his visit in November, 1709, being doubtless one of many, so we may be sure he was acquainted with Archer. At the beginning of 1713 the Duke was Ambassador in

Paris, and three days after that issue of *The Post Boy* he wrote this letter to Lord Oxford

I understand Mr Vanbrugg is fallen so much under her Majesty's displeasure that it is supposed he will be removed from his employment in the Works I think myself obliged, as much in respect to her Majesty's service, as in Justice to Mr Thomas Archer, to acquaint you that, impartially speaking according to my skill, he is the most able and has the best genius for building of anybody we have I mention this in case only that Mr Vanbrugg be removed, and give me leave to add that this is a matter in which I *will say*, with Sir Positive, if I do not understand it I understand nothing, and as I can guess at all his competitors, viz Mr Talman, Mr Wren,¹ Hawksmere &c, if I were with your Lordship, I could give such objection to every one as would, I am confident, have some weight At present I shall only say that if this be done for Mr Thos Archer it will be an obligation to you

It was not done, but the request is interesting Archer was a member of the brief school of extreme Baroque in this country, the school of Vanbrugh, whose following also included Hawksmoor, Wakefield, James of Greenwich, Etty, Southwell—and "Mr Price of Wandsworth" In importance he ranks immediately after Hawksmoor, for he was a great deal more inventive than the mere subordinates, such as Wakefield and Etty Yet he seems to have had no professional connection with the leader of the school, for he is never mentioned in the letters But if no pupil, the designer of that engaging oddity, the church in Smith Square, Westminster, was certainly a disciple In fact their styles are similar enough to have been confused Chettle in Dorset has been attributed to Vanbrugh when it is almost certainly the work of his disciple The word, however, is not alto-

¹ Sir Christopher's son, also called Christopher, was something of an architect himself and according to Campbell he designed Marlborough House

gether fair to Archer, for he had quite a manner of his own, though a curious one, as in the garden pavilion at Wrest with its elliptical dome Since the Duke of Shrewsbury seems to have acquired his taste from living four years in Rome, it is possible that the architect was also much abroad who, in his loyal judgment, had "the best genius for building of anybody"

Subsequent revelations did not dispose the government to think better of Vanbrugh In June, Oxford received an anonymous letter from Liverpool with an enclosure The writer said

A Letter happening accidentally into my hands, Containing the following Lines, I thought it my Duty to discover a Person of such trecherous Principles, who altho' being rais'd to such Honor, under her Majesty, yet makes no scruple of railing against the Church's Upholders, and Owns his chiefest Interest lies, in the coming in of the Pretender I wou'd have acquainted your Lordship with it before, but that I had no opportunity of securing the Letter, but only reading it, since which time the Person to whom it was sent, hath cut out the Latter Sentence, for fear of a Discovery, Containing the Words from the Mark to ye End of the Letter

Enclosed was a copy of this letter from Vanbrugh to one of his northern relations still living in the Chester neighbourhood

I don't know whether you have heard, that I am turn'd out of my place in the Works, for writing a Letter to the Mayor of Woodstock in which I say the Duke of Marlborough has been bitterly and barbarously persecuted, for these two Years past, in which I only meant the Continuall and Daily Labels and Pamphlets which pelted him, but some High-Church Members of Parliament wou'd needs have it, I meant the House of Commons and so have push'd the Matter to my being turn'd out I believe I cou'd have prevented it, if I wou'd have made my Submission to those High-Church Blockheads, but that I would on no terms do

However, I wou'd not have you Concerned at it, for if the Pretender comes in, I shall gett more by it than they that made it their business, or were imploy'd to turn me out

What Vanbrugh can have meant by this, if he ever wrote it, remains a mystery

There was little that required his presence any longer in the south, at Hampton Court, St James's and Whitehall he was a stranger, though allowed, rather curiously, to remain on the Greenwich Board, and Blenheim was deserted So in October, 1713, he went north to enjoy the consolation of friendship in a palace that had not been a failure, with a patron who had treated him well At Castle Howard, the centre block was finished and in the previous year Pellegrini had been painting in the hall Phaethon's horses on the dome, out of control, plunged eternally into the Baroque abyss where other Italians had run wild in the stucco of the mantelpiece Pellegrini, a very indifferent artist, had been brought over by Manchester in 1708 to decorate Kimbolton Italian artists were coveted, so that "if he be a good one," Vanbrugh said, "he may find work enough," and soon Wren was planning to use him on his great dome But he was quite unworthy of the Cathedral, and did not actually work either at St Paul's or Kimbolton Instead, Vanbrugh carried him away into the north

And so at last Carlisle moved out of his old Castle and into his new one, for all this time old Henderskelfe had continued to stand in front of the south portico, looking more and more out of place as the parterre began to take shape Vanbrugh was pleased to find Carlisle very satisfied with his building after "a years tryall of it" Those were days and nights of autumnal storm Rain lashed the cupola and the wind roared in

Wray Wood, but not a candle blinked in the long corridors—or blinked when he was by His letters during the visit, from which I have already quoted in Chapter Eight, compose a picture of that house whose soul is gay, beginning its convivial life in rough weather It was a critical year, for the comfort of more than one vast plan was being tried So it was gratifying to be able to write, "I have now a proof, that the Dutchess of Marlborough must find the same conveniency in Blenheim, if ever She comes to try it (as I still believe she will in spite of all these black Clouds) " And he wanted her to be told about Castle Howard It is clear that he was still a very long way from hating this woman whose "*Generosity*" he admired in pleading his cause to the Duke although she believed he had treated her very badly One gathers that the Mayor of Woodstock was not the only man to whom he had displayed his allegiance

I must own to you at the same time That her notion, that I had not done what I did, but upon her declining at Court, has been no small inducement to me, to expose myself so frankly as I have done, in my Lord Dukes and her particular Cause, for tho' I cou'd have born she should have thought me a Brute, I cou'd not endure she shou'd think me a Rascall

Another happy letter was to Edward Southwell at Kings Weston, expressing the hope, "I shall see you as well pleased as the Lord of this place is " That would shortly appear, for Southwell reported that he had finished the roof To work for such an enthusiastic client was not altogether a blessing, for he was apt to take too much upon himself, with the result that some of the work was "abominable " Vanbrugh especially

did not want his imposing chimneys to be spoiled, and it was not enough to have fixed their height on paper "In my last," he said, "I told you I wished you would not go up with the chimneys till I was with you on the spot, to make tryall of the heights, etc , with boards I am glad to find you now of the same opinion, tho' you had not yet rec'd my letter, for I would fain have that part rightly hit off"

Much of the time was spent in strolls with Carlisle, when the two might be seen, by the rest of the house-party, far off on an eminence discussing with outstretched arms some new improvement On return, there was rest and pleasant company, "and *very good housekeeping*", and in short though the conversation was politics from noon till midnight—"The Archbishop here drinks the Queens health, and her Ministers health, and then says I pray God they are honest"—yet it was also an escape from politics, that London gamble in which they all had lost And so it was gently revealed to the Liberal spirit how in future it might rejoice at Castle Howard though it mourned through the whole land

No doubt another interest was the progress of Gilling and Duncombe, neighbouring houses that may be described as the children of Castle Howard, though purely on the evidence of style Drake's *Eboracum*, published in 1736, contains the following note on one of the churches in York "Here Lyes also, as yet without any memorial, that worthy Gentleman William Wakefield Esquire, whose great skill in architecture will always be commended as long as the houses of Duncombe Park and Gilling Castle stand," and in *Vitruvius Britannicus* Duncombe is said to have been "Designed by William Wakefield Esqr 1713" Nevertheless it is

unlikely that he could have designed it alone, for it is by no means an *imitation* of Castle Howard and might rather be called, with Gilling, an original work in the Vanbrugh-Hawkesmoor manner, yet Wakefield could be credited with nothing else in that manner, and his later work is soberly Palladian. There are in fact quite a number of houses that display the manner without acknowledging the authorship, and the explanation must be, that one of the two architects provided the idea, perhaps no more than a sketch, and left it to a local man to develop and carry out. The presence of a rotundo at Duncombe, almost identical in design with Vanbrugh's at Stowe, seems to clinch the matter as far as one house is concerned.

But perhaps after all it was another occupation that kept him at Castle Howard for well over a month. It is a tale told by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, full of wit and malice, and by nobody else, so that I can only repeat it in her own unreliable words.

I can't forbear entertaining you with our York lovers (Strange monsters you'll think, love being as much forced up here as melons.) In the first form of these creatures, is even Mr Vanbrug. Heaven, no doubt, compassionating our dulness, has inspired him with a passion that makes us all ready to die with laughing 'tis credibly reported that he is endeavouring at the honourable state of matrimony, and vows to lead a sinful life no more. Whether pure holiness inspires his mind, or dotage turns his brain, is hard to find. 'Tis certain he keeps Monday and Thursday market (assembly-day) constantly, and for those that don't regard wordly muck, there's extraordinary good choice indeed. I believe last Monday there were two hundred pieces of woman's flesh (fat and lean) but you know Van's taste was always odd, his inclination to ruins has given him a fancy for Mrs Yarborough he sighs and ogles so, that it would do your heart good to see him, and she is not a little pleased, in so

small a proportion of men amongst such a number of women, that a whole man should fall to her share

My dear, adieu

For the time being I will say no more of this lady than that she was probably a relation and possibly the mother of his future wife, though herself still under forty, while he was forty-nine. If this is correct, she was not a widow, and Lady Mary must have been mistaken about his intentions. Whether she was better informed about his earlier moral life is beyond investigation. The author of *The Provok'd Wife* does not appear to have been an ascetic. On the other hand he was too creative to have been a rake. He found there were still some pleasures in the world even for an outcast Whig, and as he said, it was so very agreeable at Lord Carlisle's "from the nature of the Place, the Works he had done, and the manner of his Living, that I shall have much ado to leave it, till I am forc'd to come to Towne, to take care of several uncomfortable things which I fear, will long be Allays to the Pleasures I cou'd else have some tast of"

He must have known that one of these uncomfortable things—since he had lost the Queen's favour—would be the ambition of John Anstis to become Garter King of Arms. Perhaps he wished that he had not treated heraldry as quite so much of a joke. Almost offensively neglecting to fit himself in any way for the office he held, he had remained for ten years, in contentment, a King of Arms without a coat of arms. It seemed to him a judicious moment to remove that anomaly, and at the beginning of 1714 he applied to the deputy Earl Marshal for confirmation of the arms which he declared his Dutch ancestors had borne, but which his grandfather had

neglected to register at the College The Duke of Norfolk being a Roman Catholic, his deputy at this time was the Earl of Suffolk and Bindon who later employed Vanbrugh on a sad work of destruction at Audley End¹ Lord Suffolk instructed Garter and Norroy to investigate "the truth of these premises," and on the 30th of April they confirmed the arms, quartered with Elizabeth Carleton's, and the crest of a lion emerging from a three-arched bridge, once a pun, now rather appropriate² But it was of no avail, for in May the Queen went back on her word, as he expected, and granted the reversion to Anstis The betrayal formed a postscript in a letter to the Duke of Marlborough "She said she had been under an obligation to me not to consent to it, but my behaviour had been such in writing that Letter to Woodstock, that now she had done with me—That was her expression" Often his postscripts seem to contain what was deepest in his mind, and this wound up a letter full of profound misgivings for the future of England

The Tories were in the saddle and were proceeding to carry out their programme, which amounted to the destruction of the Whigs in general and of the Dissenters in particular Their leaders were Oxford and Bolingbroke, a moderate and an extremist—and in that lay danger For the party system could only mass Englishmen into two groups on a handful of major issues Just as the Whig watchword of "Liberty" united noblemen who laughed at the psalm-singing chapelites and chapelites who decried the loose-living noblemen, so the Tory

¹ See Appendix I, p. 299

² "Gules, on a Fesse, Or, three Barrulets, Vert in Chief, a Demy Lion For a Crest, a Demy Lion, issuant from a Bridge composed of three reversed Arches, Or"—Noble

party united firm supporters of the Protestant Succession and die-hard Jacobites, and that was the larger and more difficult embrace. For it had been the Tories under Harley, not the Whigs, who introduced the Act of Settlement in 1701, assigning the Crown to the Protestant House of Hanover if the Queen should outlive her children. It was the country squires and anglican clergy who had determined, after the tense crisis of the Revolution, that never again should a Roman Catholic rule in England.

Thirteen years had passed, and as the end approached Queen Anne could control her Stuart heart no more. Being sent a miniature of her exiled brother, James, she burst into tears and covered it with kisses. Like the declining Queen Elizabeth, she could not bear to think of her successor, that German princeling who would dispossess her family for ever, and she virtually prevented her ministers from paying court at Hanover. Little harm it did them, for the Elector was quite openly in the other camp. It seemed as if the Whigs had stolen the Act of Settlement.

That was the state of affairs when Vanbrugh wrote to the Duke at Antwerp on the 29th of May, 1714. The Whigs were profoundly alarmed about the intentions of the Government, and the Elector seemed to be offering them no support. "Tis not to be conceived how the Jacobites are spirited up. Those warm honest Gentlemen of the Hanover club at a meeting two nights since, were almost resolv'd to separate upon it. In a word, one does not know where this thing will go, if something is not quickly done, to give some satisfaction in the Electors present mysterious proceeding." Men with long memories for Marlborough's loyalty in times of crisis were even

saying that he was "wholly embark'd in the pretenders interest," and when the time came would conduct him to the capital like a second General Monk. It was indeed "high time for a little encouragement from Hanover."

Not much in that letter can have been to the Duke's taste. He had asked for a financial statement about Blenheim, and received the estimate made for Oxford in 1711 stating that another £87,000 would be required. Next Vanbrugh reported that Strong, knowing that the arrears of £42,000 would never be paid by that Government, had at last determined to sue the Duke for his share, "to prevent the loss of so great a Sum as he Sees he and his Family are not able to bear." Lastly,

I send with this a Draught of the Obelisk my Lord Carlisle is raising to express his grateful sense as an Englishman, of what he thinks the Nation owe your Grace. It is in all, a hundred Feet high.

It may have given the Duke some bitter pleasure to think that there was one monument to his glory for which he would never be called upon to pay.

The crisis approached, for it was clear that the Queen could not last much longer, and while Vanbrugh expressed the anxiety of every Whig, the Tory leaders themselves were suffering the anguish of Tantalus. They had the disposal of England's destiny within arm's length and could not grasp it. If the Queen died in the existing state of affairs a man would ascend to the throne who was simply a creature of the Whigs, and they themselves would be utterly confounded. Meanwhile the breach between the active Bolingbroke and the sluggish Oxford had grown wider. Faced with imminent disaster, Lord Oxford continued to write his weekly doggerel for the Scriblerus Club and to say that all would be

well He seemed to think that by some miracle, even as the country stood, the Tories would retain power under the new King Swift, their chief adviser, retired to a country rectory in despair

In May, Bolingbroke knew that he must act alone, and he evolved a plan that would still, if there were time, save the situation All the Whigs and even all the "Hanoverian" Tories must be ejected from the Government, the Army and Navy, and the Magistracy Before the Queen died there must be, in effect, a Jacobite dictatorship in England Whether he was absolutely committed to the introduction of James Stuart we do not know His immediate objective was to make the Tories so unassailable that they would remain in power whatever happened Either George would be a King on Tory terms, continuing the Government indefinitely on pain of revolution, or a definite offer of the throne would bring James to his senses, he would renounce Rome, and national sentiment would at last be on his side That is certainly what Bolingbroke wished Meanwhile there was no time to spare, for it would require several months to effect the purge, and a beginning must be made at the centre of government As the Queen weakened her ministers quarrelled more violently At last, on the 27th of July, Oxford fell, and Bolingbroke was free to carry out his plan To the Whigs it was the penultimate disaster In a few months all would be arranged, and then the Queen would die

Chapter Thirteen

THE REWARDS

The gentleman's productions are very numerous, and it is something extraordinary that he should have been employed in so many considerable works.

LONDON & WESTMINSTER IMPROVED

BUT for all her Stuart loyalty Queen Anne was unable to be so accommodating. She would gladly have prolonged a boring existence for years, let alone months, to keep the detestable German out of England and the faithful Lord Bolingbroke in power. But the strain of the 27th of July had been too much for her. Sitting at the council table until two in the morning she had heard her ministers rage at each other, forgetful of the one thing more important to them than policy—her health. Finally she was compelled to dismiss Oxford, who was after all an old and devoted servant. Two days later she fell into an apoplectic trance, and on the 1st of August, 1714, died. The Tories were dismayed. In a moment Bolingbroke's daring plan dissolved into nothing.

They were dismayed, because they had staked everything on the Queen's survival for a time, which was indeed their only hope. But the Whigs, despairing of the present reign, had thought carefully of the next. While news was flying to King George in Hanover, a Regency was appointed to await his arrival. There was intense excitement throughout the country, but not a riotous meeting occurred. Everywhere the enemies of Hanover looked on, outraged and helpless. They were a great army that could never now be mobilised. Worst

of all, the party itself had been wrecked on the rock of the succession, and was to remain out of office for forty-seven years "What a world is this! and how does fortune banter us," wrote Bolingbroke to Swift And Swift replied with the epitaph of a lost cause "Fortune turned rotten at the very moment it grew ripe "

When news reached the Marlboroughs in exile that the Queen was dying, they immediately decided to return to London for the critical days There was a risk, but it had to be taken The patriot Duke had already helped one foreigner to the throne of England, and it was possible that he might be needed to help another As for the Duchess, she was so delighted to be returning to England that she was "ready to submit to popery or anything that cannot be helped "

It was the 1st of August when the boat drew in to the cliffs of Dover and there came to meet it across the water the dull sound of guns But they were not the guns of civil war, for there was another sound, cheering The Queen was dead, and official England, suffering once more a lightning change of heart, was welcoming its former favourites They came to London in triumph, escorted by Grenadier Guards The people cheered, and it was almost as moving as that other return, after Blenheim Then on the 20th of September, the new King entered his capital "My dear Duke," he said, "I hope your troubles are now all over " It seemed as if they must be, and indeed they mostly were Onlookers observed, wrote Hearn in the bitterness of a Tory heart, "that the Duke of Marlborough was more huzza'd than King George, and that the acclamation *God save the Duke of Marlborough!* was more frequently heard than *God save the King!*" Once more he was Captain-General

of the Forces Bolingbroke fled to the Pretender Oxford went to the Tower And the King came to supper at Marlborough House

The Duke in this happy season did not forget a lesser man who also had endured great misfortunes, chiefly on account of loyalty to *him* This man had laboured for nine years and his reward had been a trifling salary,¹ with never-ending troubles So the Duke determined that he should be the first to profit by the new regime, and (like a good patron) in a way that would cost nobody anything, least of all himself The King had come ashore at Greenwich on the 18th of September to a magnificent display of Protestant loyalty, and passed up through the Hospital with the great Whigs who were his friends Next day in the Queen's House, Marlborough made his presentation, and a week later Hearne wrote in his diary, "The first knight that king George made is one Vanbrugh, a silly fellow, who is the architect at Woodstock" Officially the knighthood was conferred in honour of that mission to Hanover in 1706, when Vanbrugh had brought the Garter to the man who was now Prince of Wales, but Marlborough, of course, arranged it This man of genius, in whom nobility and meanness met in an extraordinary fashion, had refused to help his architect on the ground that it would be better for him to wait for "something lasting" Well, there at length it was—a knighthood, and that was all there would be But for the time being, I dare say, Sir John Vanbrugh, waiting confidently for his Comptrollership again, was sufficiently gratified

The Duke's only ambition now was to finish Blenheim

¹ Even the £400 a year was discontinued after 1712, and it was the arrears of this that Vanbrugh was to claim in vain almost until his death

with all possible speed, and he had not been more than a day or two in England when he set off for Woodstock with Vanbrugh. Walking round that silent, lop-sided palace he told him, "that when the Government took care, to discharge him from the claim of the Workmen for the Debt in the Queens time, he intended to finish the Building at his own Expense" Three months before, it will be remembered, Strong had reluctantly decided to sue the Duke for his arrears, finding that the Tory Treasurer would not even acknowledge his petition. Vanbrugh had strenuously tried to dissuade him, emphasising "one short, plain but home circumstance" of a letter from the Treasury, by which, he declared, the responsibility of the Crown had been admitted. But it was simpler to squeeze milk from a stone than cash from the last Government, for Blenheim, and the contractors would certainly have proceeded if Tory power had not collapsed like a house of cards. In the enthusiasm that resulted, the Whigs voted half a million to settle the Queen's debts, and in the following May, £60,000 of it for Blenheim. All further expenses the Duke, who was now fabulously rich, agreed to shoulder himself. £54,000 was then the estimate which Vanbrugh presented, and within a few days the workmen were back. It seemed that Blenheim's troubles, like the Duke's, had disappeared with the Tory menace. In fact, there was only one reason to doubt a happy ending to the work—the sum issued was not *sixty* thousand pounds, but *sixteen*.

Before that was known, however, the Treasury, exuding public spirit on every side, had determined to submit the Office of Works to another reform. That this had been desirable for some time is clear from the story of

Benjamin Jackson which I have told in Chapter Four—how Wren's incorrigibly yielding way with rascals had driven Vanbrugh to exasperation. For his period, Vanbrugh was unusually hard on corruption, though characteristically because it seemed to him "utterly against common sense." So in November, 1714, when he was practically sure of returning very soon to the Comptrollership, he put down for his friend Lord Halifax, the Treasurer, "a few heads which wou'd save the King a very great sum of Money, in unnecessary and unreasonable Works, and lessen his expense considerably in many Useless or Mischievous Officers." In fact it was chiefly Jackson that he had in mind. For in spite of unscrupulous conduct, this man, who seems to have been a drunkard and a bully, had been allowed to remain in office all these years. Vanbrugh evidently had his knife into the fellow, for his first "head" was, that the office of Master Mason should be abolished, together with the other Patent Artisans. Nevertheless, passing unscathed through another reformation, Jackson continued to be Master Mason until 1719.

Still, that was of little importance, for with the Kit-Cats in the ascendant once more, and Carlisle succeeding Halifax at the Treasury, it was obvious that the lean years were at an end for Vanbrugh, and on the 24th of January, 1715, he was appointed to his former post of Comptroller and to a new one specially invented for him—Surveyor of the Gardens and Waters.¹ I imagine it was Carlisle himself who induced the King to create this post, for no one was better able to appreciate Vanbrugh's genius in landscape gardening than the owner

¹ To take effect from the following 15th of June. See the Patents and Accounts of the Office of Works.

of Castle Howard The post brought with it a welcome salary of £400 a year,¹ and full power to design and alter, subject to approval from above The Surveyor must look after "the severall Rivers Conduits Pipes Engines and other things whatsoever" and provide exact plans of the gardens and of the water supply, both for fountains and canals, and for the cisterns indoors Also he was required to take care of "ye Plants as well in our Gardens of Pleasure, as also in our Kitchen & Fruit Gardns that Our Tables & Kitchens be duely served " To one who described a greenhouse as a "Magazine for a parcell of foolish Plants," this duty was perhaps the least agreeable

In the following April, Lord Halifax and the other Treasury Commissioners signed the "New Orders for Governing the Office of Works " Sir Christopher Wren was eighty-two and at last plainly unable to bear the full burden of chief office The mind was fresh as ever, but the body had failed him So his post was put into commission, and Wren says that "altho' I had the honour to be first nam'd with the old title of Surveyor, yet in acting I had no power to over-rule, or give a casting Vote—I did however as often as my Infirmities would permit, attend the Board " Considerably enlarged, it now consisted of the following officials the Surveyor, Comptroller, Paymaster, Secretaries of the Treasury, Surveyor of Crown Lands, and Surveyor of Woods on both sides Trent, of which "the Surveyor or Comptroller to be always one," which meant that the Comptroller was president, except on the rare occasions when the

¹ As Comptroller he had 8s 8d a day, and 6s 10d a day "riding charges"—entered in 1715 for 267 days Including the new salary he may have received about £650 £700 a year from the Treasury

Surveyor attended¹ Sir Christopher could now take as much or as little interest in the work as suited him. A happier way of dealing with the aged architect could not have been thought of, and it seems that Vanbrugh was the man who made it possible.

Wren was by nature a moderate Tory, in recent years no doubt a supporter of Lord Oxford, and that was enough to damn him outright in the new reign. It is certain that many Whigs, such is the vulgarity of the purely political mind, would have ejected him without a qualm, and appointed one of their own party. The post would naturally be offered to Vanbrugh, who was not only a recent martyr, but the natural successor to Wren, quite apart from political considerations. And in fact it *was* offered to him, in all probability at this time. "I have likewise had," he told Tonson in 1719, "a very hard Disappointment of not being made Surveyor of the Works, Which I believe you remember, I might have had formerly, but refus'd it, out of Tenderness to Sir Chr Wren." I assume the offer was made in the winter of 1714-15, and that Carlisle at the Treasury made it. This man was certainly Vanbrugh's most useful friend among the great, and probably his dearest. He it was who entrusted him with a palace when he had not yet built a cottage, who made him Clarenceux Herald when he had ridiculed heraldry, who made him Comptroller of the Works and later it seems Surveyor of the Gardens, and who, since he would not agree to be Surveyor-in-Chief, reappointed him to his lost Comptrollership. He it was who entertained him for months at a time, who stayed with him at Scarborough, and who became the godfather of his child. With Marlborough, New-

¹ It may be noted that the Patent Artisans were no longer included

castle, Manchester and Halifax, Carlisle belonged to the age—the Kit-Cat age—that admired Vanbrugh greatly and Wren a little, whereas the next age admired Wren less and Vanbrugh not at all. Luck was with him in 1715, and once more he was to suffer for his loyalty. For what was offered him in that year of good fortune would never be offered again.

That August, Hawksmoor was promoted to be Secretary of the Board and chief Clerk of the Works, that is to say, at Whitehall, St. James's and Westminster. So the partnership was maintained and apparently strengthened. But in fact the great days were over of what has been pleasantly called "the triumvirate." Wren had become a genial, shadowy figurehead, and soon Hawksmoor would be swept aside, notwithstanding his "fine ingenious Parts," and not indeed for want of expostulation. To Wren it was merely a retreat into other countries of the mind, for since the days of "A letter, concerning the pleasant and profitable Invention of a Transparent Bee-hive, written by that much accomplish'd, and Very Ingenious Gentleman, Mr. Christ Wren," he had been a man of immense and varied knowledge, interested in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, almost every branch of the intellect, a scientist as much as an artist. "Strawberries have a most delicious taste, and are so innocent," said Aubrey, "that a woman in childbed, or one in a fever, may safely eat them; but I have heard Sir Christopher Wren affirm, that if one that has a wound in his head eats them, they are mortall. Methinks 'tis very strange."

The immediate result of Wren's lapse into a world of quiet reading and meditation was a great deal of additional work for Vanbrugh, which he found rather

embarrassing For Commissions debate and determine, but do not design He was now dominant in the Office of Works and probably his greatest activity at St James's and Hampton Court began at this time At St James's he designed the brick kitchen that survives to this day,¹ and at Hampton Court a large number of rooms were finished in a heavy style that compares very badly with the earlier work They are doubtless the result of Vanbrugh's direction, but so also must be the prodigious and splendid piers of the Bushey Park Avenue which rose in the spring of 1715

It was a time of great building activity throughout the land, and he was extremely busy again after the idler months of official banishment To suppose that the brief list of houses undoubtedly by Vanbrugh is the sum of his work for private clients, would be as silly as supposing that a kitchen and a pair of gate-posts represent his work for the Crown in a single year In the reign of George I, several houses were built with which it is extremely probable he was concerned, though in exactly what capacity it is impossible to decide, for nothing is recorded of their building Some, like Duncombe, are so plainly in the manner that we are sure he at least provided the first drawings Others, like Gilling, intrigue us by at once displaying and departing from the style Compton Verney, described in the '30s as "a well built house of 1714," belongs to the former class Indeed in elevation and original plan it had a marked resemblance to Duncombe, its contemporary This charming house is thus unique in containing the work of the two most celebrated architects of the century, for Robert Adam enlarged it His alterations, in exquisite taste,

¹ See Appendix I, p 297

are a lasting comment on his description of Vanbrugh as "a great man whose reputation as an architect has long been carried down the stream by a torrent of undistinguishing prejudice and abuse", for he modestly extended Vanbrugh's design, and only introduced his own manner in the entrance front, with extreme diffidence. It was in the preface to his *Works* that he paid the well-known tribute

Sir John Vanbrugh's genius was of the first class, and in point of movement, novelty and ingenuity, his works have not been exceeded by anything in modern times. We should certainly have quoted Blenheim and Castle Howard as great examples of these perfections, in preference to any work of our own, or of any other modern architect, but unluckily for the reputation of this excellent artist, his taste kept no pace with his genius, and his works are so crowded with barbarisms and absurdities, and so borne down by their own preposterous weight, that none but the discerning can separate their merits from their defects. In the hands of the ingenious artist, who knows how to polish and refine and bring them into use, we have always regarded his productions as rough jewels of inestimable value.

Even so were the audiences of Sheridan shocked by *The Provok'd Wife*. But Vanbrugh's work is indeed full of barbarisms, and only a mind raised above fashion could hold such opinions in an age that differed from Queen Anne's in taste as clear soup differs from thick.¹

Tradition connects with Vanbrugh four houses begun about the year 1715, two of which no longer exist. A Victorian Gothic mansion stands where Cholmondeley

¹ Where Adam led, many teachers followed.—Sir Joshua Reynolds, who immensely admired the picturesque in Vanbrugh, James Northcote, who said that he had been treated as "a black sheep, for no reason in the world, except that he was cleverer than they, that is, could build houses & write verses at the same time", Uvedale Price, and Payne Knight. Vanbrugh was much admired during the first quarter of the 19th century, suffered a second eclipse in the Gothic Revival, and only emerged into his third and present popularity after the Great War.

stood in the county of Cheshire, but the old elevations may be seen in *Vitruvius Britannicus*. They are only characteristic of Vanbrugh in one respect,¹ and Campbell does not ascribe them to him. Also in Cheshire is Oulton Hall, which was burnt to the ground in 1926. Here the hall and portico were characteristic, but I cannot help thinking it extraordinarily unlikely that he designed the rest of this charming and lamented house of red brick and stone. Still, traditions are not to be despised, and no doubt he made more visits to Chester than are recorded, for many friends and relations remained behind, and there are Vanbrughs in the district to this day. The third house is Benningborough in Yorkshire, less doubtful than Cholmondeley, but more doubtful than Oulton. And again we observe the Vanbrugh legend and neighbourhood. It is certainly one of the works he had in mind when he wrote from York in 1721 "There are Several Gentlemen in these parts of the World, that are possess'd with the Spirit of Building." Yet it sets a more puzzling problem of authorship than any of the other houses in this book. Outwardly it presents two oblong fronts which in my opinion Vanbrugh cannot possibly have designed.² Inwardly, however, the true manner appears in the hall and in the corridors, clearly derived from Castle Howard. Yet whoever he may have been, it was not an architect that made Benningborough glorious, but a craftsman, for all its

¹ Two bays with Corinthian pilasters, very similar to the central bay in the early design for Eastbury.

² To mention a detail, neither Wren, Hawksmoor, nor he himself ever broke their window architraves with a projection like a human ear: they constantly broke them at the top, but always with a square projection. The curving "ear" is a fragment of the ornamental Baroque of the Continent, as distinct from the Baroque of England that consisted of simple forms dramatically arranged. In fact, the one English use of it that I can recall is in an anonymous scheme for the Duke of Newcastle's house. See Wren Soc. Vol. XII, Plate XL.

rooms are enriched with exquisite carving in wood

The fourth house is Shotover Park, near Oxford, yet another in which all record of the architect has been lost. Here, house and garden were the creation of a father and a son, I might almost add, respectively James Tyrrell the elder was a man of considerable taste and learning, the author of a history of England and a member of the Queen's College. It was in the last three years of his life that he began to rebuild Shotover. Now in the Oxford of Queen Anne and George I, the architect who had inherited all Wren's practice, and something of his reputation, was Hawksmoor, and by far his finest work for the University was the reconstruction of Queen's through the first thirty years of the century. Obviously a neighbouring scholar like Tyrrell was in touch with his College and interested in the work, and so it will surely have been Hawksmoor whom he engaged, for Shotover, though extremely plain and simple, has an arcaded basement like Queen's and features in common with his designs for a classical All Souls. I do not believe that Vanbrugh had any connection with the exterior of the house. But Tyrrell died in 1718 when it was still unfinished, and his son, the general, was a Whig who had acquired a number of Court appointments in the new dispensation and was probably as much inclined towards Vanbrugh as his father had been towards Hawksmoor. Only Vanbrugh, one thinks, could have planned the existing garden, with its wonderful perspective of wood and water, tapering on the doubled image of a Gothic fane, and this it will have been that he showed with particular pleasure to Lord Carlisle and his daughters, when he took them there in 1725.

In the summer of 1715, Wren said he was too old to

be Surveyor at Greenwich any longer, and on the 1st of August Vanbrugh succeeded him, though the change in leadership was merely nominal. The Board asked James to find a copy of the instructions given to Wren at the far-away beginning of St Paul's, but they hardly intended to enforce them, for

taking notice that the General Design of the Hospitall being already formed, and the Board meeting once a fortnight, they think it needless to give any general Instructions to the Surveyor, but that the Surveyor lay before the Board, from time to time, what shall be wanting, and take their directions thereon

The Duchess of Marlborough had not put such trust in her architect for years. Yet he seemed to deserve it, because instead of designing a new pulpit for the Chapel ("the present one being very old and the furniture stole") he acquired a veteran and transferred it down river from Hampton Court. Every year he attended from twenty to thirty meetings of the Board, apart from other visits to the Hospital unrecorded. At first he stayed where the Commissioners had given him a lodging, but it was not many years before he could climb the hill to his own house nearby.

He had been in want of a country retreat not far from London since 1714, when he had sold his estate at Esher to the Duke of Newcastle. But perhaps it was the Surveyorship that convinced him it would be sensible as well as delightful to live at Greenwich, for early in 1717 he acquired some acres on the top of Maze Hill. He must have begun to build at once, because in December of that year he was writing from Greenwich "I was forc'd to come down here last night against my good will, for I wou'd fain have Stay'd in Towne till I cou'd have

come to my Country moiscell (as the Bugadiei says) in peace " The scheme he evolved was characteristically extensive, for he decided to build four houses in all, one of them for himself, and another for his brother, Philip to found, as it were, a little rural Adelphi But for himself he reserved the actual brow of the hill, where tumbling headlong to the river it offered almost exactly the view that Giffier had painted

It is difficult for those who know a squalid and tram-sounding Greenwich, if they know Greenwich at all, to capture the full beauty of such a plan—to think of the Greenwich that a little French guide-book of 1707 described as *L'un des plus beaux villages du Royaume* The bore of Victorian industry, rolling from one end of London to the other, splashed over Blackheath and left a scum of brickwork clinging to Maze Hill Standing in front of Vanbrugh's last and desperate towers, it is almost impossible to imagine days when they were alone, when the meadows of Essex stretched to blueness, the domed City was sharp, small and glittering, and the world was not only handsome but could actually be seen Yet for days like that, of quite ordinary visibility, Vanbrugh built his house on a hill Like few in his time he loved the inexplicable caress of distance, "The bright complexion of the shire," and though Maze Hill was not Kings Weston, it offered a landscape richer in incident and more harmoniously arranged

On Vanbrugh Fields, as they are called to this day, there was no one to please but himself So presently four buildings arose, "erected in a very particular manner, to resemble a fortification, with battlements, towers &c, and a gateway of like form, under which you pass on your approach to them " An elliptical arch

between two brick lodges, as plain as honesty could make them, let you into the domain. There, all was in the same intimidating style. First there was Vanbrugh House with a round tower at either end and a half-tower or bow in the centre. Struggling away from symmetry, it was a remarkable building, on the frontier of a world of art which Vanbrugh, it seemed, was always preparing to enter, a world in which the dictatorship of rule would be finally broken, symmetry replaced by balance, and yet the classical ornaments retained. But the spirit of the age was too strong, and in the end, perhaps, he was turning away from that frontier. Only in the smallest buildings was he at any time so medieval as to be unsymmetrical, yet I cannot help wishing he had used in some larger ones that common shape in castles, the round tower, and left us a Baroque Bodiam or Shirburn. In fact if there were round towers at the four corners of Kimbolton, Shirburn Castle in Oxfordshire would be extraordinarily like it.

This little building, and "Mince-Pie House" that was another, and the gateway I have mentioned, were all destroyed about the year 1902. But fortunately Vanbrugh Castle, where he lived himself, has survived and is now a school. Whether it was he who christened it "The Bastille" we do not know, but it certainly amused him to pretend he was living in a fortress. "I hear your Grace was pleas'd to Storm my Castle yesterday," he wrote to Newcastle. "I hope next time you'll be so gallant to let me know of your Design, which if I do, I'll endeavour to give you a Warmer Reception." Outwardly the pretence was as good as a moderate income could make it. A small section of Maze Hill was posted out with an imposing array of walls, turrets and bastions,

all in brick, and through the battlemented archway were the battlemented towers of the house, quite indifferent to Wren's dogma that "Higher than three times the Breadth is indecent." In this remarkable brick structure from the dawn of the Romantic Movement, or as if, indeed, from the hour before dawn, the lack of symmetry is even greater. The casual passer-by thinks of it as Victorian, and exactly in that lies its greatest interest.

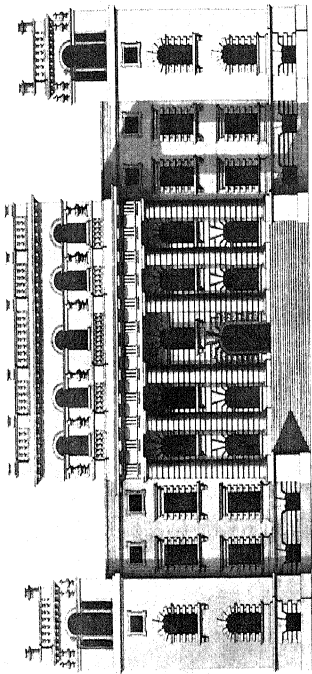
I shall conclude this chapter by introducing a house more important than any of these others begun in the new reign. Eastbury in Dorset. Lord of the Admiralty George Dodington, whose sister had married Jeremias Bubb, a wealthy Weymouth chemist, bought a farm on the edge of Cranborne Chase, and by 1718 Vanbrugh had designed for him his third largest mansion. That is the date given in Vol. III of *Vitruvius Britannicus*. But in Vol. II, published in 1717, there is another set of engravings, dated 1716, and entitled "A New Design for a Person of Quality in Dorsetshire" by the "learned and ingenious Sir John Vanbrugh." There is little doubt that this was an early scheme for Eastbury. The two plans, which are very similar, show that he had reached a new point in the development of his theme. A rectangular house is placed beyond a deep rectangular forecourt, arcaded from end to end, with the base courts on either side. All the complicated shapes of Blenheim have been reduced to an arrangement of rectangles—simplified as only the mature artist knows how to simplify. It seems that the house in the "New Design" was found to be too large, and between 1716 and 1718 Vanbrugh modified his plan and re-drew the elevations, immensely improving them. I shall leave Eastbury now until a later chapter, for only the forecourt and the

offices had been finished in 1720, when George Dodington died and the property passed to his nephew, George Bubb, the Weymouth chemist's son, and the century's most perfect specimen of plutocratic absurdity¹

Thus it was that Bubb Dodington, as he called himself, came to strut among his retinue of wits and poets in the glare of gilded stucco and painted plaster, hearing Thomson read from the MS of *The Seasons*, or Young from the first edition of *Night Thoughts*. Then, in one of his innumerable "rich and flaring suits," he rolled about the park behind six black horses, while "his bulk gave full display to a vast expanse of brocade and embroidery, and this, when set off with an enormous tye-periwig and deep laced ruffles, gave the picture of an ancient courtier in his gala habit." That was how he appeared one day at St James's when, kneeling to kiss the Queen's hand, his lilac breeches "forgot their duty, and broke loose from their moorings in a very indecorous manner." Less sensitive than the Lord Oxford who travelled for seven years on the Continent after a slightly different mishap at the Court of Elizabeth, in the same posture of obedience, Bubb Dodington continued to fawn upon the great till at last Lord Bute "unwilling to overlook a witty head that bowed so low, put a coronet upon it, which merely served as a ticket for the coronation procession, and having nothing else to leave to posterity in memory of its owner, left its mark on the lid of his coffin."

Bubb Dodington did not leave his mark on the earth of Dorset. By his uncle's will, Eastbury passed to Lord Temple, who, caring only for his new Adam front at

¹ Dodington left £30,000 for completing Eastbury, but his nephew spent £140,000 on it.



Elevation of Eastbury, one of the Mansions of the Earl of Sandwich, in the
 Strand, London, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, 1684.

The Architectural Library

EASTBURY, Elevation of the Garden Front from Vitruvius Britannicus.

Stowe, after offering anyone £200 a year to live there, blew it up with gunpowder. Perhaps it was fitting that the house where George Bubb, engrossed in his illusion of grandeur, snored aloud at the dinner table between jokes, while the gold and silver embroidery round his bed displayed the buttonholes of the waistcoats it was made from—this house of bubble splendour should one day end in an explosion. To-day, all that remains of Eastbury is a number of spacious glades, one wing of a forecourt with an arcade leading nowhere, a slight undulation in a field, and a massive arch from the top of which have grown two fir-trees, almost as tall again.

Chapter Fourteen

THE DUCHESS

*Tough, Tough, Tough as the Devil, you see
I can't break her.*

ALPHONSO IN *The Pilgrim*

THE man to whom Vanbrugh parted with his house at Esher was "Permis" of the Kit-Cat Club, a young Whig with a future in politics. As Thomas Pelham he inherited the estates and title of his uncle the Earl of Clare, and was still only twenty-one when in 1714 he became Duke of Newcastle, by which time he was one of Vanbrugh's best friends and most ambitious clients. Now it might be true that the Duke of Marlborough longed only for a little peace and a completed Blenheim, but the Duchess had not lost her interest in the world. She would never again rule the spirit that ruled England, but she could still direct the fortunes of her distinguished family. This meant, at the moment, acquiring a suitable husband for her plain but sweet-tempered grand-daughter, Lady Harriet Godolphin, and it occurred to her that "Permis," who was extremely rich and politically orthodox, might be the man, particularly as he was "very silly and good-natured, and easily persuaded to anything."

But even with silly and good-natured people these matters require a certain delicacy of approach, and she knew that recently the Earl had become very intimate with Vanbrugh, who was not only enlarging Claremont, as the Esher estate was renamed, but also reconstructing his town house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. If

Vanbrugh agreed that Lady Harriet would make him happy, there could be no better matchmaker, she thought, so she asked him to help her, adding that he was the first person to whom she had ever mentioned the subject Flattered, and always anxious to deserve her good opinion, he began to manœuvre with caution, for it was agreed that the Duke must not be put to the embarrassment of a formal refusal Presently he sent in a report

’Tis true that partly by company being in the Way, and partly by his illness when I was most with him, I have not yet had an opportunity of sounding him to the purpose What I have yet done therefore has been only this I have brought into discourse, the characters of several Women that I might have a natural occasion to bring in hers, which I have then dwelt a little upon, and in the best manner I cou’d, distinguish’d her from the others Thus I have taken three or four Occasions to do, without the least appearances of having any view in it, thinking the rightest thing I cou’d do would be to possess him with a good impression of her before I hinted at any thing more He had seem’d to allow of the merit I gave her, tho I must own he once express’d it with something joind which I did not like, and that was a sort of wish (express’d in a very gentle manner) that her bodily perfections had been up to those I describ’d of her mind and understanding I said to that, that tho I did not believe she wou’d ever have a beautiful face, I cou’d plainly see, it wou’d prove a very agreeable one, which I thought was infinitely more valuable I said futher, that her Shape and Figure in general wou’d be perfectly well, and that I would pawne all my Skill (which had us’d to be a good deal employ’d in these kind of observations) that in Two years time, no Woman in Town wou’d be better lik’d He did not in the least contradict what I said, but allow’d I might very probably be right

The truth was, as Vanbrugh discovered when he led the conversation round to the topic of women, that the young man’s notions were very unusual for one of his age and station.

He had made more Observations on the bad Education, and wrong manners of the Ladys of the Court and Towne, than one wou'd have expected, And own'd he shou'd think of Marriage with much more Pleasure than he did, if he could find a Woman (fit for him to marry) that had such a turn of Understanding, Temper and Behaviour As might make her a useful Friend, as well as an Agreeable Companion, but of Such a One, he seem'd almost to despair

Vanbrugh had no sophisticated society girl to offer, and heartily agreed It was then that he quietly advanced, by way of contrast, the gentle excellences of Lady Harriet, and when the Duke began to see what was meant, "the Hopes of having a Posterity descend from the Duke of Marlborough had an extraordinary weight with him " But such an alliance could not even be contemplated at Claremont without the advice of the Whig leaders, of whom already the rising light was Robert Walpole, and he at this moment was consulting Vanbrugh about Houghton, though when it came to rebuilding he employed Ripley To the Duchess, Walpole was nothing but an upstart, so it was with reluctance that she sent Vanbrugh to see him, "knowing," as he said, "I shou'd certainly go that way whether she wou'd or not " He returned with the announcement that Lady Harriet would be expected to bring with her a dowry of £40,000 "I never heard of such a Fortune," said the Duchess "Lady Harriet is not a Citizen, nor a Monster," and she concluded that that was merely a polite way of saying no For "as in all her other Traffick, so in a husband for her Grand Daughter, she wou'd find him Good and Cheap " That was the end of of the matter, she supposed, and there for the time being it rested indeed

In February, 1715, Newcastle House in Lincoln's

Inn Fields was nearly finished, and the workmen seemed to Vanbrugh "a Swarm of Bees." I imagine his reconstruction was mostly internal, for the old elevation, now admirably restored by Sir Edwin Lutyens, is not at all in his manner, and was no doubt designed by the original architect, Captain Wynne, though Vanbrugh may have added pavilions to the little forecourt. A great deal more extensive in the end were the alterations at Claremont, but at first the Duke was content with only slight additions to the country "box" he had acquired.¹ Pictures of the completed mansion show that Vanbrugh was unable to conceal this desultory manner of growth—a puny centre to which great wings and towers had been attached. But it contained some noble rooms, and one room designed for entertainments on a colossal scale, which so roused the curiosity of the Duke of Chandos that Vanbrugh vowed he should not see it until it was finished, "that it may Stan in his face, And knock him downe at Once." Unfortunately, what Vanbrugh made, "Capability" Brown unmade. The entire house disappeared later in the century, together with those marvellous, elaborate gardens through which Claremont acquired a reputation hardly second to that of Stowe.

Meanwhile the novel sensation of security kept the Whigs in a fair state of contentment. Vanbrugh joked with his friends, and the Duchess arranged an expedition up river to Barn Elms, with Carlisle and Newcastle, Dr Garth and Vanbrugh in the barge. But in April, 1716, Lady Sunderland died, that lovely and gentle creature who was the Duchess's favourite daughter, and after a month of gloom the Duke suffered a paralytic stroke. Hastily summoned to St Albans, Dr Garth

¹ Wren Society Vol. XII, Pl. lii displays the original plan.

recalled him to a kind of shaky life, but as a man who had grown on a sudden very old Henceforth Vanbrugh would have to work for the Duchess alone, and now there would be no appeal to a sensible, masculine mind winning battles abroad So he urged her to complete the towers, and was always trying to arouse her enthusiasm "The beauty of this place at this time is hardly to be conceived," he would say, or "Mr Thornhill goes on a pace in the Hall, and has begun with a better Spirit in his paintings than anything I have seen of his doing before "

With most of Wren's responsibility in the Office devolving on him, he was extremely busy in this summer of 1716 The Princess coming to London, he complained, "keeps me running to and fro between St James's and Hampton Court," where the Prince's order to finish was already "engaging almost every minute I at present have " In the thick of this came one of those rare occasions on which he appeared in public as a herald When the Queen gave John Anstis the reversion of Garter, in her rage at Vanbrugh's letter to the Mayor, it appeared that the question was settled once and for all But Anstis had Jacobite friends, and after the crisis found himself in gaol with a number of other M P s, one of whom committed suicide Power had gone to the Whigs' heads, and as Vanbrugh said, "I find our Friends dispos'd to make a good use on't, Hang Whip Pillory &c " Soon after this, old Henry St George died, and Anstis—from prison—put in his claim for the vacancy! Naturally it was not allowed, and in October, 1715, Vanbrugh, as Clarenceux, was granted the office for the time being. Thus it was, that he went down to Windsor to be Garter King of Arms at the degradation of the Duke of Ormonde in the following July

Ormonde had had the misfortune to be Marlborough's successor in the war, and to find that his Tory government (wisely) left him powerless to act. After the Succession, he was impeached as a Jacobite, his estates confiscated and his honours extinguished, and he himself fled to join Bolingbroke in exile, until, during the '15 Rebellion, he landed in Plymouth, only to sail back to France in complete disillusionment. The degradation took place on the 12th of July after morning prayers in St. George's Chapel, and in the presence of the Dean, Prebendaries and Choir, the Poor Knights and a great crowd of spectators, Vanbrugh began by reading the Sovereign's warrant at the brazen desk. "The achievements of the degraded knight were then severally thrown down by the heralds, and spurned out of the choir and west door of the chapel, where the soldiers of the garrison were under arms." Whereupon Vanbrugh concluded the ceremony by pulling the plate of arms from the stall.

A fortnight later he called at Blenheim on his way to drink the waters at Scarborough, where Lord Carlisle had promised to stay with him all the while. Serious trouble with the Duchess had been brewing for some time. She had been enraged to find that he was still living in the condemned Manor House, she thought him quite untrustworthy, and if she had one particular abomination among so many children of his brain, it was "that ridiculous bridge" which he had thrown across the valley. "Now it is built," said Lord Berkeley, "the business is to make a river, for at present you might without straining your self, jump over it." Declaring that she had counted thirty-three rooms in the structure, and a house at each of the four corners, she added sarcastically, "but that which makes it so much prettier

than London Bridge is that you may sit in six rooms and look out at a window into the high arch, while the coaches are driving over your head ”

However, Vanbrugh was in a facetious mood when he wrote to her from Blenheim

Even that frightful Bridge, will I believe at last be kindlier look'd upon, and I will venture my whole prophetick skill, on this one Point, That if I liv'd to see that extravagant project compleat, I shall have the satisfaction to see your Grace fonder of it, than of any part whatsoever of the House, Gardens or Park, and then every body will say, *'twas the best money laid out in the whole design* And if at last, there is a house found in that Bridge *your Grace will go and live in it*

“A very diverting letter of Sir John's which only shows the want of a vast deal to finish the Building,” was the Duchess's comment. She was not to be mollified by jokes that were almost impertinent, nor even by the postscript in which Vanbrugh imparted his choicest news. Newcastle had written that he wanted to “talk largely of that great affair of Matrimony” and in particular of Lady Harriet Godolphin, for he was desperately determined to marry somebody that very winter. The Duchess was delighted—but not with Vanbrugh.

Since the Duke's illness, the building of Blenheim had been entirely in her hands, and suddenly she had discovered that £900 was being spent every year on a monstrous causeway each side of the bridge of which she knew nothing. It reads as if Vanbrugh was genuinely surprised by the violent letter he received. “I know no one thing about the building that was so much consider'd and so cautiously determin'd,” he said.

The Duke of Marlborough, your Grace, my late Lord Godolphin,

The Duke of Shrewsbury, the late Duke of Montague, Sir Christopher Wren and several others were thoroughly consulted in this matter, and several meetings there were upon it, at Kensington, Montague House &c, when the Modells were inspected, and that of Sir Christopher Wren, Stuck full of pins, by which he pretended to lessen the charge, was quite rejected, and that I propos'd was resolv'd on, which has never been alter'd since, that ever I heard of, and is the same now pursued

It was true that no fixed sum had been allotted, but the Duke had agreed to employ a moderate number of men there, and not after "a short word or two, but a great deal of plain intelligible talk, And that not in a crowd or hurry, but quietly in a Room alone with only Mr Wise and I Upon the whole Madam there has been no whimsy or secret in this matter, but a plain, fair and honest intention to serve you in it, in the best manner I cou'd " And he was honest when he wrote

I am so far from disliking the plainness with which your Grace writes, that I am very glad you do so, there being no other way to a right understanding But as I have often seen you *heated* by wrong informations or misconceptions, and not made any difficulty at owning your *mistake* when you have found it, So I shall be much disappointed, if when I wait upon you at Blenheim, I do not find you very well satisfied with my defence about the Causeway

I declare very truly and positively that I will make no secret to you of any thing, and by consequence if I do, must be (what by God I am not) a very Lying Rascal

Probably this letter did not convince the Duchess, who had secretly come to a big decision about her architect Yet she was generous enough to admire Kings Weston, and to write and tell him so Her letters from Bath, where the Duke was convalescing, were mostly about Newcastle, and replying from Scarborough, he

promised on return to encourage the young man's thoughts "still more the way which I really think is best for him" Privately he hoped that she would not fail once again through stinginess "to compass the best match in England"

On the 18th of October there was a great reunion at Blenheim, with Vanbrugh arriving from the north, Hawksmoor from the east, and the Duke and Duchess from the west, accompanied by Lady Harriet The Duchess hurried round the estate, her critical eyes observing everything—the bridge, the causeway, the Manor House—and at the Manor House she was satisfied that recent reports were correct walks were being laid out, and a new wall was begun Naturally to her that wall seemed better built than any about the park Indeed, there was not a particle of Blenheim over which she was not utterly in disagreement with its creator Yet all this day she was extremely polite to him, gave her opinion without heat, and when he had gone—according to his own account—spoke well of him to Hawksmoor, who was instructed to repeat what she had said Vanbrugh was a little surprised that she never mentioned the marriage, but reflected that they were never alone together and that there was really nothing to say until he had seen his friend again He did not reflect that they would certainly have been alone if she had wished it.

In London, he found a letter from Newcastle begging him to come down to Claremont at once But he had promised to visit Walpole at Houghton, and on return, there was another letter from the Duke saying that he must put off leaving Claremont until he came He found him in considerable agitation, and when they were alone, opening his timid heart, "Permis" asked him a

hundred questions about Lady Harriet, and begged him in this final talk to be candid, knowing "what a Terrible Disappointment he shou'd be under, if he found himself ty'd for life to a Woman not Capable of being a useful and faithful Friend, as well as an Agreeable Companion " And Vanbrugh was able to allay every doubt, confirm every rosy phrase, and give the fair answer to every question, with real sincerity It really did seem to him an admirable match

The young man's mind was made up, and the mood of anxiety fell from him like a garment Immediately descending to business, he asked what the Duchess had said at Blenheim about the dowry Vanbrugh replied that she had said nothing about the marriage at all That was very extraordinary, said Newcastle, for surely she must have told him how she had engaged Peter Walter to negotiate an agreement? Walter, he said, had been pestering him ever since Hence his anxiety for a final talk with the one experienced friend he could trust.

When Walter appeared at the door in person, Vanbrugh's astonishment was complete The two negotiators stood face to face. Certainly each was quite well known to the other, for Peter Walter was a professional match-maker and money-lender, a celebrated fellow who had engineered a great number of alliances in the one capacity, and even more bankruptcies in the other As Pope said,

What's property, dear Swift, you see it alter
From me to you, from you to Peter Walter

It cannot have helped matters that Vanbrugh had drawn such an extremely unflattering portrait of his

kind in old Coupler of *The Relapse* The Duke then proceeded to tell him everything that Vanbrugh had done, from the conveying of the first hint, and expressed the hope that they would now unite to bring the affair to a happy conclusion The more Vanbrugh thought of it, the more he was enraged with the Duchess He alone had been able to achieve her end For two years he had willingly helped her And when all had been brought to the edge of fulfilment she had quietly discarded him without even the civility to say so There seemed to be only one explanation that a much bigger issue was involved Yet for Newcastle's sake he agreed that both he and Walter should write to that extraordinary woman by the next post from Claremont

He began his letter with an account of what had happened, put down simply and without comment, only he was careful to emphasise that everything had hung at the critical hour on himself But he had no intention of leaving it at that

And now Madam, Your Grace must give me leave to end my Letter, with telling you, That if the D of New was surpris'd to find, You had said so much to Mr Walters at the Bath, and nothing to me on this Subject at Blenheim, I was no less Surpris'd than he I don't say this Madam, to Court being further employ'd in this matter, for a Matchmakers is a Damn'd Trade, And I never was fond of Meddling with Other Peoples Affairs

Having handed in his resignation in one capacity, within a few days of returning to London he met with another surprise Brigadier Richards showed him a document he had just received from the Duchess, where, on twenty or thirty sheets of paper, "without any new matter having happened," Vanbrugh saw "She had

given herself the trouble to draw up a Charge against me, beginning from the time this Building was first ordered by the Queen, And concluding upon the Whole, That I had brought the Duke of Marl into this Unhappy difficulty Either to leave the thing Unfinished, and by Consequence, useless to him and his Posterity, or by finishing it, to distress his Fortune, And deprive his Grandchildren of the Provision he inclin'd to make for them " As Vanbrugh's eyes fell upon page after page of laborious accusation, this monument of a ten years' enmity, he knew that his first suspicion at Claremont had been correct—the Duchess wanted one thing only, to dismiss him from Blenheim, to be rid of him It was too much to be borne silently, and on the 8th of November, 1716, he wrote her this letter

MADAM,

When I writ to your Grace on Tuesday last I was much at a loss, what cou'd be the ground of your having drop't me in the service I had been endeavouring to do you and your family with the Duke of Newcastle, Upon your own sole motion and desire But having since been shewn by Mr Richards a large packet of building papers sent him by your Grace, I find the reason was, That you had resolv'd to use me so ill in respect of Blenheim, as must make it Impracticable to employ me in any other Branch of your Service These Papers Madam are so full of *Far-fetched Labour'd Accusations, Mistaken Facts, Wrong Inferences, Groundless Jealousies and strain'd Constructions* That I shou'd put a very great affront upon your understanding if I suppos'd it possible you cou'd mean anything in earnest by them, but to put a Stop to my troubling you any more You have your end Madam, for I will never trouble you more Unless the Duke of Marlborough recovers so far, to shelter me from such intolerable Treatment I shall in the mean time have only this Concern on his account (for whom I shall ever retain the greatest Veneration) That your Grace having like the Queen thought fit to get rid of a faithfull servant, The Torys will have the pleasure to see your Glassmaker, Moor, make just such

an end of the Dukes Building as her Minister Harley did of his Victories for which it was erected

I am

Your Graces most obedient Ser^t

J VANBRUGH

If your Grace will give me leave to print your paper I'll do it very exactly, and without any answer or remark *but this short letter tack'd to the tail of them, That the world may know I desir'd they might be published*

In all their quarrels he had never dared to write, nor did the Duchess ever expect to receive, such a letter. It threw her into a tantrum which next day must have helped the Duke to a second and more serious stroke, so that even if she had her "end" it cannot have given her much satisfaction at the time.

To increase her annoyance, she had only just sent off a reply to his previous letter. Expressing surprise at his surprise, in the best *tu quoque* manner, she proceeded to a cool account of the whole affair from the beginning, and said of their last meeting at Blenheim, "I think it was your turn to speak, after what had been written, and not at all reasonable for you to find fault with what passed between Mr. Walter and me at the Bath." "It was nobody's turn to Speak," said Vanbrugh to Newcastle, "but those who had Something new to say, wch I had not, not having Seen yr Grace, but she had, having employ'd Mr Walters to you. I need make no remarks to your Grace Upon this Abominable Womans proceeding Which shall not however lessen my regard to my Lord Duke, nor good Opinion of his Grand Daughter, who I do not think has one grain of this Wicked Womans Temper in her, if I did, I wou'd not advise you to take her, tho' with the Allay of a Million."

One day the Duchess's letter returned to her, and then she wrote on it, "Tis easy to imagine that I wish'd to have had the civility I express'd in this letter back again, and was sorry that I had foul'd my fingers in writing to such a fellow "

Certainly she had achieved her end, but not in a very creditable fashion. She wanted Vanbrugh to be dismissed, yet not to expose herself to the censure of the world, or the anger of his powerful friends, by dismissing him. Moreover, she had found him extremely useful in the matrimonial affair. However, that young nobleman had yet to be secured, and he was still standing out for a large fortune. Then Vanbrugh proved his sincerity, for he continued to promote the marriage with all his energy. He interviewed Godolphin, Walpole and Townshend. He gave Newcastle continual advice. And it is not to be supposed that he did all this to please the woman of whom he said, "she is not a Fool, tho' she's a —Worse thing." Lady Harriet's father, he told Newcastle, was well disposed towards him, and favoured the alliance so much that he frankly admitted he would grant his demands, if it rested with him. But the money belonged elsewhere, and "Nobody," Godolphin said, "can help the Birth forward with the Great Lady, but she must be left to her own throws, And we must wait a little to see what that will bring forth." If she delayed long enough, Marlborough was bound to die or recover, it was thought, and either way Newcastle should get more or less what he wanted. However, in the end he agreed to £22,000, and the marriage took place on the 2nd of April, 1717. But he was disappointed in his hopes of having a posterity descended from the great Duke of Marlborough, for there was no posterity at all.

As time passed, and once again the old Duke edged his way back into this world, recovering speech and movement, he realised that Vanbrugh no longer came to see him, and wondered why. For the Duchess had not told him of the final quarrel, and "I thought after this," said Vanbrugh rather pathetically, "I could not wait upon the Duke, when she was present, And that if I endeavoured to do it, at any other time, she wou'd not like it." He still felt for his former idol a real veneration, and could he not proudly say, "I never had the misfortune to be once found fault with by him in my life?"

And so the ludicrous, pitiful episode was at an end. Vanbrugh was banished for ever from his greatest house, the building that he had regarded tenderly as a favourite child. The Duke of Newcastle abated £18,000 and got a wife who gave him no children. The Duke of Marlborough pottered about the naked rooms of his monument and occasionally wished for its architect. And Sarah the Duchess overrode them all, thrusting on to the angry triumphs of her irresistible will.

Chapter Fifteen

PYRAMIDS, ARCHES, OBELISKS

Vanbrugh's Gardens

Nature made them; I pretend to no more Merit in them than a Midwife, who helps to bring a fine Child into the World, out of Bushes Boggs, and Bryars.

VANBRUGH

GARDENING is a realm of art, though small, with a history of its own: the ally, the protectorate perhaps, but still not quite the possession of architecture. It would therefore on general grounds be reasonable to consider the gardens of Vanbrugh by themselves, even if the "Comptroller of the Works" and the "Surveyor of the Gardens" had not filled rather different places in the history of art. Vanbrugh gave to the eighteenth century, as an architect, a scale and a certain heaviness. But the eighteenth century scorned him, and only unconsciously received his gifts. He was an architect with an ancestry but no issue, bringing to an end what he also brought to perfection. In gardening it was otherwise; and his influence on the century may be measured by the link he forged between the "formal" and the "natural" schools.

Before his time there had only been formal gardening. In the small medieval enclosures that Chaucer loved, the lady of the manor sauntered on straight paths, by a fountain and a pleached hedge, a wattle fence and a little orchard, from one green arbour to another, content with the simplicity of "flowers whyt and rede" that

grew at her feet, and safe in embattled walls beyond which she had no inclination to look. Her great-great-grand-daughters did not need to be so well protected, but still the enclosed and divided garden was retained for secrecy and warmth, and in the reign of Elizabeth became as rich as the fantastic mind could make it, with all Donne in the conceits of stone and yew, and all Euclid in the geometry of knots and beds.

Yet the mind will not suffer imprisonment for ever, even between the open hands of fruit trees on a red wall, and "to look abroad into the Fields" high "mounts" of earth were constructed, with a spiral pathway "writhen about with degrees, like the turnings of cockle shelles, to come to the top without payne." This longing for a larger prospect grew with the seventeenth century, and especially when the Stuart court returned from exile with a nostalgia for everything French, for in France the formal garden had reached perfection, or at least the bounds of possibility, in the superhuman designs of Le Nôtre. Superhuman is the word, for the perspectives of Vaux le Vicomte, Versailles and Fontainebleau, with the flowerless miles of marbles and coloured earths, the straight trees, and the canals and fountains, each tangle of shimmering parabolas exactly repeated by another, were possibly made for demigods to walk in, but for courtiers only to observe from a glass door, their vacant eyes stranded on vanishing point.

The enclosed garden had survived in England until the French example was brought home. Then, as if with the gesture of a suffocating man, the yew hedge of the parterre split apart in the middle, and the landscape was given to the house a well-regulated landscape

of course, glimpsed, rather than seen, through the scribbled wrought iron of a grille, with avenues, canals and statues focussed on a central point. The leading exponents of this purely architectural gardening were London and Wise, the creators of Chatsworth, Badminton and Hampton Court, and not unworthy followers of Le Nôtre, whose most enormous geometry, with acres of gravel and grass, they were luckily seldom able to imitate. Nevertheless, at Badminton Roger North discovered that "the lanthorn is in the centre of an asterisk of glades cut through the woods of all the country round, 4 or 5 in a quarter, almost *apert de vue*. Divers of the gentlemen cut their trees and hedges to humour his vistas, and some planted their hills in his lines for compliment at their own charge." Such were the gardens, in England and France, that Vanbrugh admired as a young man, when he too became a follower of Le Nôtre, but with a difference.

It seems that he began to consider the out-works of Castle Howard quite early in the new century, for in 1703 the accounts record that there was "Mason Work Don Att ye Garding House," and by 1705 the Satyr Gate had been built, that frolic in the walled garden, where, on either side of a small archway, a squat pilaster bears, for capital, the immense looks of a Satyr, creased into smiles and wreathed in goatish hair, for each of which the bill was 30s.

Others their wit on paper oft have shown
Vanbrugh hews jests and humour out of stone,

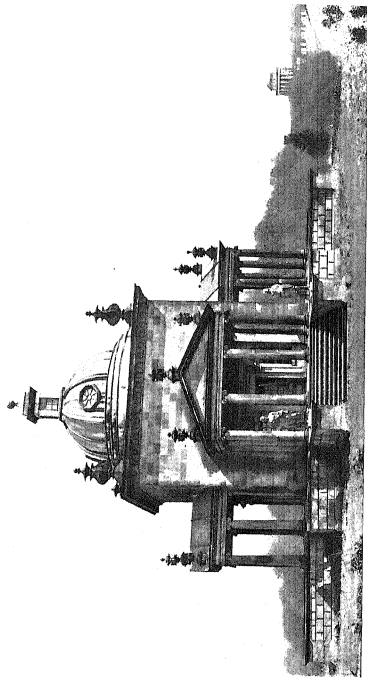
wrote Abel Evans, meaning it unkindly, but the first joke had been a good one.

In the same year, in another part of the gardens,

workmen had been employed on the bridge, and it seems that Vanbrugh had already made use of the volume of Palladio requested of Jacob Tonson in Amsterdam, for although I do not think it has been observed before, this bridge is certainly modelled on one that Palladio designed for "some Gentlemen" and illustrated in Chapter XIV of his Third Book. Vanbrugh, in fact, did little more than render it bucolic, and at the same time his own, by the use of immense rustication.

From the building of that bridge in 1705, we know that he had already evolved his general scheme, and it was in that, more than in any particular incident, that he displayed extreme originality. He was enough a pupil of Le Nôtre to want a superb avenue, crossed by another and adorned with two archways and an obelisk enough in the fashion to create a regular parterre with the perfect symmetry of stone and leaf. But when it came to the treatment of Wray Wood on its hill directly to the east, he allowed his principal walk from the Castle to follow round the edge of the wood in a natural curve, with statues at irregular intervals, and over all the undulating scene below, scattered his ornaments where the landscape seemed to require them: a domed temple half revealed through branches, a bridge in perspective, a pyramid on a hill opposite the house, yet not immediately opposite, the projecting bastion of a wall. Within a hundred yards of the windows the rule of T-square and compass came to an end, and on that account we may speak of Vanbrugh as the father of landscape gardening.

But if he was the father of one fashion, it is certain that he was equally the child of another, and in truth the development of English gardening was continual



CATTLE HOWARD, *Vanbrugh's Temple, with Hawksmoor's Mausoleum in the distance.*

it suffered a revolution, but no fracture as clean as that which in the border realm divided the school of Palladio from the school of Wren. To many minds Vanbrugh represents the highest point in that development, the peak of the parabola, before it curved into decay. I am speaking, of course, entirely of the *great* garden, and do not imply that in the seventeenth century the smaller kind, with its walls of yew and holly, its hidden alleys, ponds and bowling greens, a secret composed of many secrets, was not equally or even more delightful. Again, flowers in their modern luxuriance are a discovery of the last fifty years, and gardening is the one art at which we excel the past. Port Lympne in August would stagger John Evelyn, and perhaps there have been few gardens of a moderate size more beautiful than some which Sir Edwin Lutyens has given to the present century.

But it is easier to design a moderate garden than a big one. Great architecture requires to be seen all at once, and not merely at fifty yards, but at five hundred, and perhaps a thousand. Consequently, the parterre must be a large open space with no growth or structure big enough to conceal the building, and this is unavoidably less pleasant to walk in than the vocal shades and obscurities of a manor. Those who live in palaces cannot look for many comforts. They do not object to a journey from bed to breakfast, and ought not to mind another from the breakfast room to the solitudes of a walled garden or wilderness.

I have claimed for Vanbrugh that he designed the best great gardens in England, because in effect he compromised. He agreed with Le Nôtre that the immediate foreground should reflect the house, not indeed as in the

Fairylike colours of the modern architectural draughtsman, who makes a pond of a pavement, and a looking-glass of a lawn, but in shape and line. A building must be in sympathy with the ground it stands on, and a formal garden reflect a formal façade. Unlike Le Nôtre, however, he did not demand formalities of the horizon, nor even of that lake beyond the brow—that group of trees to the left. Architecture should rule the house, Nature the distance, and the two might come to terms over that which lay between. At Blenheim, for example, he employed Wise to carry out his immense parterre, and because of the exceptional size and grandeur of the building, allowed formality to extend much farther than at Castle Howard. The bridge that the Duchess liked so little is on the axis of the north front, and leads to an avenue on the opposite hill, extended out of sight. Nevertheless, there was even more “landscape” at Blenheim than at the other. In fighting to retain old Woodstock Manor on the right of that avenue, he inaugurated the century’s taste for romantic ruins, and by damming the water of the Glyme Brook, he extended on either side of that bridge, large lakes that appear as natural as the mountainous trees they flatter.

But revolutions have a way of discarding their first-born, and Vanbrugh, the Menshevik of landscape gardening, seemed almost a diehard to the extremists that came after. Though the first to put the new ideas into practice, so far from instituting a popular crusade against the formal, he did not even share in it. Like other moderates, he would have been appalled if he had realised the logical conclusion of his ideas, and the desolation to come. The crusade, we will say, began in 1712, when Addison wrote on gardens in the *Spectator*

Our British gardeners, instead of humouring nature, love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our trees rise in cones, globes and pyramids. We see the marks of the scissors upon every plant and bush. I do not know whether I am singular in my opinion, but for my own part, I would rather look upon a tree in all its luxuriance and diffusion of boughs and branches, than when it is thus cut and trimmed into a mathematical figure, and cannot but fancy that an orchard in flower looks infinitely more delightful than the most finished parterre.

A few months later he returned to the attack with a letter supposed to have been inspired by the article. The imaginary correspondent, describing his own estate as "a confusion of kitchen and parterre, orchard and flower-garden," declares, "I am pleased, when I am walking in a labyrinth of my own raising, not to know whether the next tree I shall meet with is an apple or an oak, an elm or a pear-tree." There is water in this "natural wilderness," but not in geometrical shapes, for "I have taken particular care to let it run in the same manner as it would do in an open field, so that it generally passes through banks of violets and primroses, plats of willow," etc. Above all, there must be no birds'-nesting, "in which I am very particular, or, as my neighbours call me, very whimsical." And in short,

I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs. By this means, I have always the music of the season in its perfection, and am highly delighted to see the jay or the thrush hopping about my walks, and shooting before my eye across the several little glades and alleys I pass through.

It is only remarkable that these last delightful sentiments were unusual and strange. To-day, so far from thinking that flowers cannot bloom nor birds sing in a

formal garden, many consider the blavery of delphiniums and hollyhocks never so well as beneath the indifference of a statue, nor the voice of the blackbird ever so haunting and clear as when it breaks out at evening withdrawn into a colonnade of limes. But much is owing to Time in these scenes of enchantment, where it has suffered the clipped boughs to regain their freedom, eased the edges of the canal, bearded pedestals with ferns and cornices with moss, everywhere untidied a little what was meant to be tidy, and allowed to be forgotten what should have been remembered with care. It is perhaps understandable that the thrushes did not congregate at first in a garden richer in paving-stones than flowers, and more remarkable for geometry than shade.¹

When Addison and Pope rose up to champion Nature against artifice, they did not know that they would be held responsible to some extent for the worst destruction of beauty since the Reformation. But so it was. The enthusiasts that came after, and they themselves, were quite unable to distinguish between bad and good. To them there was nothing to choose between an Althorp and a Chastleton: both were old-fashioned and absurd. And so for half a century the vandal rejoiced. Avenues went down before the axe like skittles. Straight walks became circuitous. Statues, columns and fountains disappeared. And among the suffering estates were Blenheim and Castle Howard, Claremont and Stowe.

¹ The formal had been carried to excess in the gardens of Queen Anne, which were simply fantasies of the drawing board, spotted, in Pope's words, with "such little ornaments as pyramids of dark green continually repeated, not unlike a funeral procession." It must be remembered that in a host of new gardens, none of the topiary had as yet any dignity or size. This was no excuse for the vandals, but it was a mitigating circumstance.

Though the credit was formerly given to Bridgeman alone, there is little doubt that we should attribute Stowe gardens in their original form to another inspiration. Their owner, Lord Cobham, was a colonel who had served under the Duke and covered himself with glory at the siege of Lille. But when that war came to its ignominious end, he turned, like Colonel Tyrrell at Shotover, to the "more elegant Cult of Gardens." He was a Whig, and a member of the Kit-Cat Club, and a friend of Vanbrugh's, whom he engaged to design a number of temples in the park, three of which remain, though slightly altered—a fine Ionic Rotunda, and the Boycott Pavilions, guarding the approach to the house by the western route, bold rusticated outposts on the brow of a hill, as delightful as they are surprising. Among the rest was a Pyramid sixty feet high, destroyed in the same century, and the Temple of Bacchus, whose plain, agreeable face I remember, before it disappeared to make way for the school chapel. If these are not sufficient evidence of my assertion in themselves, a study of the general scheme that contained them is enough to indicate that Vanbrugh was the author, and Bridgeman, at Stowe and Eastbury, like Wise at Blenheim, the assistant who reduced bold ideas to a working proposition. For Stowe had much in common with the other great Vanbrugh schemes, and displayed the same freedom of style—an octagon lake fed by two winding rivers set with bridges and islands; a woodland full of wandering paths that led by way of a Hermit's Cave or a Grotto from one clipped alley to another. And these were not placed in dreary parallels round the house, but scattered about the garden joining temple to temple by way of woodland, lake and field, so that they met continually at all angles, and at

every meeting surprised the eye with further vistas, each with some incident in stone, and none so long as to weary the imagination. The *parterre* was small, hemmed in by trees reflected in a pool. Rectangles of planting were completely absent. And generally speaking Stowe was an improvement even on the gardens it clearly resembled, displaying to a higher degree that fusion of formal with informal, which may be called the true end of gardening.

But it would be impossible to write long of Stowe without mentioning William Kent. By the time the first plan was published in 1739, Kent had already poured into the mould temples, columns and statues, as if from an inexhaustible Vitruvian cornucopia, and he had reconstructed part of the house, which in Vanbrugh's day was a seventeenth-century building. In every way he belonged to the next artistic generation, being as an architect the friend of Lord Burlington and the disciple of Palladio, and as a garden designer, the hater of everything formal and the apostle of pure landscape. In neither capacity was he prone to glorify his predecessor, and yet in both he was in debt to him: in his buildings for a certain heaviness and grandeur, in his gardens for the very ideas that he quickly developed into a headlong naturalism. Even Horace Walpole, who admired him so greatly, admits that he founded his system "upon the twilight of imperfect essays."

At Stowe he was obliged to abide by the Vanbrugh-Bridgeman theme, and there is no doubt that he immensely enriched it. There are, if I remember rightly, over thirty temples, arches and other ornaments in the park, and in its prime there may have been as many more. Although the Witch's House, and the Sleeping Parlour, Dido's Cave, the Saxon Deities, and the Cold Bath have

vanished with the woods that shadowed them, we can still direct our steps to a Fane of Pastoral Poetry by way of a Grecian Valley, or wander in Elysian Fields from a Temple of Ancient Virtue to a Palladian Bridge, half lost, as I have seen it, beyond a hill of cowslips, and pause midway at the Temple of British Worthies to consider the busts and panegyrics of those whom the eighteenth century delighted to honour Isaac Newton is there, "Whom the God of Nature made to comprehend his works", Inigo Jones, "Who, to adorn his country, introduced and rivalled the Greek and Roman architecture", and Queen Elizabeth, whose likeness urged along the gentle elegiacs of the forgotten Gilbert West

All hail auspicious Queen, thy Praise shall live
(If worth like thine Eternity can give)
When no proud Bust th' Imperial Wicath shall bear,
And Brass and Marble waste to Dust and Air

This was the garden in its greatest era of which Pope said, "If anything under Paradise could set me beyond earthly objects, Stowe might do it," and which he had in mind above all others when he composed for Lord Burlington that beautiful Epistle that is the best of all treatises on landscape gardening

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the Column, or the Arch to bend,
To swell the Terrace, or to sink the Grot,
In all, let Nature never be forgot
He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds,
Surprises, varies, and conceals the Bounds
Consult the Genius of the Place in all,
That tells the Waters or to rise, or fall,
Or helps th' ambitious Hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the Vale,
Calls in the Country, catches op'ning glades,

Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending Lines,
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs
Still follow Sense, of ev'ry Art the Soul,
Parts answ'ring parts shall slide into a whole,
Spontaneous beauties all around advance,
Start ev'n from Difficulty, strike from Chance,
Nature shall join you, Time shall make it grow
A Work to wonder at—perhaps a STOWE

Reviewing the victory of landscape gardening at a later date, Walpole declared "the capital stroke was the destruction of walls for boundaries and the invention of fosses," which he attributed to Bridgeman, who certainly made admirable use of them at Stowe and Eastbury. But it seems that he was not the inventor of the ha-ha, for in *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, from the French of Le Blond, John James wrote in 1712 of "Thorough views with concealed ditches called Ah! Ah!, which surprise and make one call, Ah! Ah!" Pope stressed the importance of this happy invention when he passed from advice on the new kind of garden, to ridicule of the old

His Gardens next your admiration call,
On ev'ry side you look, behold the Wall!
No pleasing Intricacies intervene,
No artful wildness to perplex the scene,
Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other
The suff'ring eye inverted Nature sees,
Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees,
With here a Fountain, never to be play'd,
And there a Summer-house, that knows no shade,
Here Amphytrite sails through myrtle bow'rs,
There Gladiators fight, or die, in flow'rs,
Un-water'd see the drooping sea-horse mourn,
And swallows roost in Nilus' dusty Urn

Of Kent, Walpole had an even higher opinion "He leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden" That may be true, sentimentally, but it does not follow that any garden can be Nature To distinguish between "artificial" and "natural" gardening is false All gardening is an artifice, to the placing of a single tree, whether we candidly display our skill or laboriously go about to conceal it Which then is better to shape the materials openly, using blossom, leaf and water as an architect uses marble, wood and stone, or to contrive irregularities and foster them on Nature? Which, even, is the more *artificial*, and affected a garden displaying order and proportion, or one in which this rule alone is observed, that the shortest distance between two points is never a straight line? In spite of Addison's charming picture, flowers are not mentioned by any of the landscape school, they vanished with those intolerable paterres, when the empty fields rolled in to the very shadow of the portico Kent is said to have planted a dead tree The inspiration was not Nature—it was *Salvator Rosa*

Year by year in half a dozen great parks, the formalities of Vanbrugh disappeared, and Bridgeman's plan of Stowe was soon out of date A man thinks twice before destroying his house, however deplorable in taste But out of doors he can take vengeance on his father, or repent of his own youthful follies, more cheaply One of the mid-century guide-books to Stowe contained "A Dialogue upon Gardens" by two gentlemen called Polypthon and Callophilus Here is part of their conversation

But let us move forward towards yon cubico-pyramidical Building It looks a mighty substantial one I fancy it is Sir John's, he is generally pretty liberal of his Stone However, it terminates this

Terrace extremely well Pray, do you know what that Field there, upon the right, is to be improved into?

It was impossible to leave anything alone

And after Kent had come Lancelot "Capability" Brown, head gardener at Stowe, transformed into the leading designer of the day He had few ideas, and the chief of them was negative to destroy formality wherever found This he did effectively in the gardens, smudging the Octagon into an irregular lake, but much less in the park, where the magnificent avenues were suffered to remain He could not actually ruin Stowe, which is still incomparable, and he may even be allowed to have improved it in the noble vista required by the Adam front, but we have only to compare his plan with the original to see how much of splendour and variety has gone

A similar story could be told of two other estates in this book, where fashion one day demanded "Capability" Brown At Blenheim, he changed the parterre into a meadow, and the canal beneath the bridge into a lake, which last was on the whole an improvement At Clarendon, Vanbrugh had given the Duke of Newcastle another splendid garden, with just that mixture of formal and informal that was so delightful and so much his own On the crown of the surprising hill behind the house, he erected the tall brick belvedere that has survived, "the Situation being singularly romantick," as Campbell said, "and from the high Tower has a most prodigious fine Prospect of the Thames and the adjacent Villas " Surrounded on three sides by dense woodland with a wandering descent, on the fourth it was approached in a straight line by a splendid stairway Just as at Stowe, first Kent enriched, then Brown ruined the scheme, with

its avenues and formal waters, leaving that pleasant arrangement of trees over undulating ground which was all he could ever offer posterity by way of amends

But all this was long after the year when Claremont was in its infancy and Dr Garth had wished himself a better poet to describe the scene

But say, who shall attempt th' adventurous part
Where Nature borrows dress from Vanbrugh's art?
If, by Apollo taught, he touch the lyre,
Stones mount in columns, palaces aspire
And rocks are animated with his fire
'Tis he can paint in verse those rising hills,
Their gentle valleys, and their silver rills,
Close groves, and opening glades with verdure spread,
Flowers sighing sweets, and shrubs that balsam bleed,
With gay variety the prospect crown'd,
And all the bright horizon smiling round

Chapter Sixteen

THE LAST RESORT

In short, tis so bloody Cold, I have almost a mind to Marry to keep myself warm.

VANBRUGH

ABOUT the time that Vanbrugh's career at Blenheim came to an end, John Anstis emerged from gaol, having proved that he had nothing to do with "the Intended Horrid Conspiracy," and at once renewed his claim to be Garter King of Arms. Vanbrugh decided to oppose him, and the case came up for a first hearing in April, 1717. It all rested on the settlement of what he called "the Windsor point": whether Charles II had renounced the Sovereign's right to elect Garter, as Vanbrugh claimed, or whether he had merely waived it in one particular election. On that depended the validity of the reversion that Anstis had had from Queen Anne. For a year the rivals suffered all the dreary procrastinations of the law, and then on the 20th of April, 1718, the King being present in Council, a decision was reached in favour of Anstis. The loss of an honour and a salary, especially of a salary, that would have compensated for his other misfortune, was a bitter disappointment to Vanbrugh, though it would have been scandalous had he won, and it was no more than he himself had once inflicted on Gregory King. "This Anstis is a sad thief," he said.

The luck was out, and six days later fell the next blow. Sir Christopher Wren was ejected from the Surveyorship,

and a nonentity, a certain William Benson, installed "until he should accept of some other office or place" It was, as Mr Geoffrey Webb says, "one of the meanest jobs ever put through" Benson was a literary crank with two equal obsessions Milton, and a Scotch doctor called Johnston who put the psalms into rhyme He spent his time "erecting monuments, striking coins, and procuring translations of Milton" He gave a forgotten scribbler £1,000 to translate *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse He published large and sumptuous editions of Johnston at his own expense Then he went mad Finally, recovering his wits, he lived in gloomy retirement without a friend or an interest, detesting nothing so heartily as the sight of a book But in 1718 Benson was a Whig who had written a popular pamphlet about Liberty, a Wiltshire landowner, M P for Shaftesbury, and a yes-man at St James's "It is very well known," wrote Ker of Keisland, "that Mr Benson was a favourite of the Germans" His appointment was purely scandalous, because he could only claim to be an architect on the strength of his own house at Wilbery, a charming but quite unoriginal design in the manner of Inigo Jones

Vanbrugh had known for some time that the King suspected the Board of Works in general, and himself in particular, of mismanagement—that he had never won the German's favour Perhaps he realised that the school of architecture he belonged to was already becoming the "old" school Anxiously he had canvassed his political friends, getting Newcastle to tell the King "that there is a most thorough Care and Strickt management of the Board of Works," and Sunderland to "talk effectually wth the Dutchess of Munster" (afterwards

Kendal), the King's mistress And all the time he was worried by the Garter question "Between those two Accursed things of determining the Windsor point, and My Friend Bensons, together with ten Summonses a day I have to Kensington, I am not only divested of passing one moment to my Satisfaction, but am so disorder'd by the hurry into the Bargain, That I thought 20 times yesterday, I must have dropt dead " But all efforts were in vain, and an ignorant nobody stepped into the place that he himself might have had, but for loyalty to Wren There was nothing left but to beg his friends "Not to let Anstus put any tricks upon me, which he has Already Attempted in a very Benson like Manner I have dam'd luck to have two Such Fellows get over me " Besides, "I am flead at this time with Blisters," he complained

Vanbrugh took the appointment very badly, having naturally expected that the Surveyorship he had so generously refused would be offered to him again when Wren died or at last resigned it But to judge by the following letter, so far from helping him to the higher office, it may have been all his powerful friends could do to keep him where he was

I have reason to believe, the King has had such an unfair Account given him secretly of my Management, both of his Houses and Gardens, As must make me Appear a very bad Officer in the Employment he has been pleas'd to intrust me with

And I am inform'd, This Representation has been follow'd, with an Attempt to have me remov'd from his Service And that this Attempt, is in a way of Succeeding

Now Hawksmoor had no such powerful protectors, not being a former Kit-Cat member, and no sooner had

William Benson secured himself in the Office than he opened the doors to a squad of hopeful cronies, and ejected the existing Clerks of Works in a body. In place of Hawksmoor, the chief Clerk and the Secretary, this brazen nepotist installed his nephew, Benjamin Benson, who was, if possible, even more incompetent than himself. So Hawksmoor's cry of protest was mingled with Vanbrugh's, the one, injured and whining, the other, indignant and gruff. Only Wren, whose active life was all behind him, rebuked the insolence of power with dignified silence.

And there arose a king that knew not Joseph
And Gallo cared for none of these things,

he wrote in Greek under the date, 26th of April, 1718 "*Nunc me jubet Fortuna expeditus philosophari*," he remarked to someone, and retired from the world into an oblivion of quiet thought on the Longitude.

The triumvirate had been broken beyond mending, and the end of what it stood for was in sight. Because the new Surveyor was so incompetent that he needed a permanent deputy to do his work (a mischievous precedent), he could not avoid introducing *one* man of merit into the Works, and Colin Campbell was his choice. Campbell has earned his quiet yet safe immortality through the splendid volumes of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, without which many a plan and elevation would have vanished, including those of Eastbury and Grims-
thorpe. But he was also a practising architect, and he belonged entirely to the new school and the next age of English architecture, which, reacting violently from the Baroque of contemporary Europe, discovered two oracles

of infallible speech—Palladio and Inigo Jones The leader of the school was the young and enthusiastic amateur, Lord Burlington, its literary exponent, Alexander Pope

Now certainly Jones was the greatest English architect, and no one would have acknowledged it more willingly than Wren Palladio, too, had been studied by Wren and probably even more closely by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor These men, however, were far too busy developing the architecture of movement, and far too imaginative and free, to be hobbled with a set of Italian rules that Jones himself had broken whenever he liked Also, none of them had ever been to Italy But young English noblemen, bowling southward on the Grand Tour with all their native reticence about them, were as grieved by the debaucheries of Rome as they had been ravished by the chastities of Vicenza Already Campbell had written their manifesto in his preface Palladio was no longer one of several great architects, he was God,

the great Palladio, who has exceeded all that were gone before him, and surpass'd his Contemporaries, and indeed, seems to have arrived at a *Ne plus ultra* of his Art With him the great Manner and exquisite Taste of Building is lost, for the Italians can no more now relish the Antique Simplicity, but are entirely employ'd in capricious Ornaments, which must at last end in the Gothick For proof of this Assertion, I appeal to the Productions of the last Century How affected and licentious are the Works of Bernini and Fontana? How widely Extravagant are the Designs of Borromini, who has endeavoured to debauch Mankind with his odd and chimaerical Beauties, where the Parts are without Proportion, Solids without their True bearing, Heaps of Materials without Strength, excessive Ornaments without Grace, and the Whole without Symmetry? And what can be a stronger Argument, that this excellent Art is near lost in that Country, where such Absurdities meet with Applause?

It is then with the Renowned Palladio we enter the lists, to whom we oppose the Famous Inigo Jones

Perhaps Pope alone of that party was clever enough to see where the rule of Rule would end

Yet shall (my Lord) your just, your noble rules
Fill half the land with imitating fools

So it was Italian Baroque that chiefly created, by revulsion, English Palladianism, but Vanbrugh was nearly as bad, and no doubt it seemed that he, too, "must at last end in the Gothick" He was, however, too big a man to be slighted by Campbell, whose object was to display in *Vitruvius Britannicus* the superiority of the English product, and while Wren is meanly represented, each of Vanbrugh's great works is there with a flattering comment Kings Weston is "great and Masculine," Castle Howard "extream Magnificent," Blenheim naturally no less, and of that Campbell writes, "I am at a Loss, how to express my Obligations to this worthy Gentleman for promoting my Labours, in most generously assisting me with his Original Drawings, and most carefully correcting all the Plates as they advanced" These were natural civilities to one who was still beloved by a posse of Whigs, but I do not suppose they blinded Vanbrugh to the all-too-obvious implications of the preface, or prevented him feeling the cold wind of a change in taste It is hard for the older generation to watch the sunlight of fashion passing away, and Vanbrugh was not at all prepared to be out of date. In fact it is clear that from about this time, consciously or unconsciously, he did attempt to adjust his loud architectural manners to the new etiquette, and in his last work showed considerable respect for the Palladian code

Anstis, Benson, the Duchess, and the blisters were enough to make the spring of 1718 as damnable as that of 1713. One more misfortune and it was worse. In the Easter Term, Strong brought an action in the Court of Exchequer against the Duke of Marlborough and Vanbrugh together. He alleged that Blenheim was built at the Duke's expense, that Godolphin had appointed Vanbrugh surveyor on the Duke's behalf, to make contracts in his name, that he had been engaged by Vanbrugh and had worked on the Duke's credit, and that he was still owed £7,314 16s 4d together with the interest since January, 1715, when a third of his debt had been paid—in all, about £8,000. He asked for a decree that the Duke should pay the money, but if it was untrue that Vanbrugh had acted on his behalf, that Vanbrugh should pay it himself, which the Duchess, contesting the action in the Duke's name, fervently hoped to bring about.

It is important to distinguish between the legal and the moral aspects of the case. Legally Strong could only act as he did, since the Duke had been his employer, not the Crown. But morally the issues were more involved. It was shameful that the Duke should be held responsible—in the Duchess's words, it was "quite new to make any man pay for a building to compliment himself." It was equally shameful that the workmen should be out of pocket. And it was even more shameful to try and involve the unrewarded architect. On the face of it the Treasury was to blame. Yet Vanbrugh in his cheerful way had almost trebled his original estimate, and it was not even certain that the government of 1705 was prepared to provide unlimited funds. And so, because the Duchess raged at the expense, and

the man who had caused it, and the house in which she could "never have any pleasure," the lawyers wrangled year after year, from court to court, about a mere £8,000. When the Duke died he was worth well over two million.

Thus it was a gloomy summer in which Vanbrugh, worried by the Blenheim case and a prey to his curious blisters, went about in dread of losing the Comptrollership, through Benson and his party at Court. In these obscure manœuvres of State, one thing is plain, that those whom we regard as the great ones of the age, the writers and architects, were mostly pawns in a much grander game of politics, and with just the usefulness of pawns. For example, Vanbrugh was intimate with Lord Suffolk, who as deputy Earl Marshal had tried to get him the office of Garter, and was employing him at Audley End. So when he died this year it was Vanbrugh whom the clique engaged to impress on his son, having "most Credit with him," the importance of coming to London and securing his father's post, against the candidate desired by Anstis. And no one perceived the importance more clearly than their agent. "There is in that office opportunitys daily of Obliging Numbers of People, which power one wou'd wish in the hands of one who will be sure to oblige the Right Sort." He tried, in his own affairs, to comfort himself by thinking how many of the Right Sort were in positions of power. It was the sudden coup that he dreaded, "those Lettres de Cachet, that Surprise folks every now and then."

Nevertheless he was in a good humour when he told Newcastle about a supper with the Brigadier Watkins, Keeper of His Majesty's Roads.

I am to acquaint you, That the Tate a Tate Club reviv'd last night, at the Hercules Pillars Alehouse, in high Holborn There was Stinking fish, and Stale cold Lamb for Supper with divers Liquors made of Malt in an execrable Manner And amongst many Material things in our Conversation, it was Nemine Contradicente agreed, That Your Grace had writ a most Tyranical Letter to the Brigadier, And that altho, if he were not a Blockhead, Blockheadissime, he might see there was a fund of love in the bottom of it, Yet it had so hard an Outside, that a Man of a Moderate Understanding, might have some Sudden thoughts of hanging himself upon it In short, he is of too great importance to our Board, to be parted with till Wednesday evening at Soonest If he do's not Attend your Grace in 24 hours after, if you Please to hang him, the Tate a Tate say they have nothing to object So much for the Brigadier

His attention at this time was divided among an unusual number of clients Claremont and the gardens of Castle Howard were advancing well, and he was at work on the gardens of Stowe A beginning had been made on the wings of Eastbury, with their splendid arches, and this year he evolved that similar arch for a forecourt at Kings Weston, and gave Lord Bristol a design for Ickworth which he never used It may be, too, that he had netted another great commission

Living in the North of England was a certain bluff old sailor who had once treated with the Emperor of Morocco and was called Admiral Delaval—not the famous one, but his nephew In 1717 he bought his cousin's tumble-down house on the Northumberland coast, Seaton Delaval, and although he was bound to admit "I consider my estate will not bring in superfluities of money," he decided to beguile his old age by restoring it Yet reflection led him to a bolder fancy, and a doubt Restore—or completely rebuild? It was a difficult decision, too difficult for him to make alone

"I should tell you," he wrote to his brother in February, 1718, "that Sir J Vanbrugh built Castle Howard And it is from thence I hope to call y him " And again in a few days, "I intend to persuade Sir John Vanbrugh to see Seton if possible & to give me a plan of a house, or to alter the old one, which he is most excellent at, and if he cannot come, he'll recommend a man at York who understands these matters I am much out of order with the Scurvy " Whether Vanbrugh arrived that spring we do not know, but it is certain that he soon made the Admiral think no more of repairs by showing him how he might have the most modern and imaginative house in all Northumberland

In the following December he made another of his round-about descents on the north, though not on the far north Carlisle had asked him to join the Christmas party at Castle Howard where Lady Moipeth was expecting a baby, and this time he would not "take Blenheim" on the way, nor Chester, for he had other ports of call Nottingham Castle, a classical building on the edge of a precipice, belonged to the Duke of Newcastle, who had never seen it But the situation appealed to Vanbrugh, and having persuaded him to make it his northern seat, he was going there to see what alterations would be required At the same time he had some kind of political letter to deliver to the Duke of Ancaster nearby So he arrived at Grimsthorpe about the middle of December and slept in a house that before long would contain his last work Then taking to the road again, with a brief halt at Belvoir to view and privately condemn the new work there, he arrived at Nottingham, and next night in the warmth of his inn wrote to Newcastle It was the 17th of December, 1718

Twas horrible a day, as Storms, hail, Snow, and the Devil c in
make it, I have been over your Castle, inside and out and am glad
I have Seen it at the worst, since it has not alter'd my Opinion of it
at all the Rooms being calm and warm, and all Still and quiet
within doors As to the Dehors, I find them capable of a much
better disposition both for use and Beauty, than I ever thought on
You may have as agreeable a Castle Garden as you can wish, of
near three acres, the Park is an extream pretty piece of ground,
And the Views from the upper part of it, are ight good And so
upon the whole I think I may most reasonably congratulate your
Grace on your being Master of this Noble Dwelling Which I cannot
but think, you will extreamly like when a little us'd to it At first
perhaps, you'll think it Stairs you in the face, with a pretty Impu-
dent countenance

Actually the last thing he wanted was for Newcastle
to visit the building at that moment, bleak and square
in the snow above a midland town, so he offered a page
of reasons to forestall him Alterations would be better
undertaken in the spring, and "Besides, the ways are
so execrable and the days so short, that I plainly find,
by my own driving, (wch is none of the Slowest) you
will Not get hither in less than four days "

In fact it took him three days in his own vehicle to
reach York, "through such difficultys as the Stage Coach
cou'd not pass, which I left overset and quite disabled
upon the way " And it was still snowing when he arrived
at Castle Howard on Christmas Eve—to find an irrita-
ting request from the Duke to meet him at Nottingham
next day! However, Carlisle gave him a great welcome
and was clearly in the best holiday mood, not at all
ready to think about his daughter's marriage in January,
but drinking Newcastle's health every meal, saying
everything the King did was right, and swearing he
would have his Christmas out before he stirred, "tho the

World and ten Weddings depended upon it " In particular they were all rejoicing in the repeal of the Schism and Occasional Conformity Acts, by which the Tories had hoped to stamp out Dissent "I find many of the Clergy of this Country," observed Vanbrugh politely, "dispos'd to be more drunk than ordinary this Christmas, to enable them to bear this Great Affliction with such humility as becomes the Cloth "

It was Christmas Day, 1718, and he was writing to Newcastle

There has now fallen a Snow up to ones Neck In short, tis so bloody Cold, I have almost a mind to Marry to keep myself warm, and if I do, I'm sure it will be a wiser thing than your Grace has done, if you have been at Nottingham But I believe my second Letter to you, will have kept you Safe in Lincolns inn fields My Lord Carlisle says, if you come to Nottingham now, he believes you will never come there again

And so in a remark that seemed no more than a jest he gave the first delicate hint of his intentions

For Vanbrugh, the cynical dramatist, the incorrigible bachelor of fifty-four, was about to marry a girl of twenty-five, Henrietta Maria Yarburch of Heslington Hall near York, and he was not at all looking forward to the amusement of his friends There is no doubt that he had already received her father's consent when he arrived at Castle Howard, for the wedding was fixed to take place at York in three weeks' time, and whirlwind marriages were not then in vogue among the families of Yorkshire Yet he seems to have mentioned the subject to no one in London (or a report would have reached Newcastle) but began in the most oblique fashion to broach it by letter

The Yarburchs were as old as the Norman Conquest, but it will be safer to begin with the young woman's grandfather Sir Thomas Yarburch was High Sheriff of Yorkshire and according to Anthony Hamilton "a great country-bumpkin" who caught Mary Blagge on the rebound from the French Ambassador and carried her away behind four lean horses to his "miserable little castle" of Snaith. Their son James was born in 1664, and was thus exactly as old as his future son-in-law. He was a godson and page of James II when Duke of York, entered the Guards, and became Marlborough's aide-de-camp. By his marriage to Ann Hesketh he acquired Heslington, and when Snaith was burnt down about 1707, it was there that the Yarburchs went to live. Being then only two miles from York, they could easily take part in the social life of that northern metropolis, and at some ball or assembly, no doubt, they first met Vanbrugh in a party from Castle Howard.

By 1713 he was having a warm enough flirtation with one of them to evoke the malice of Lady Mary Wortley Montague. One would naturally suppose, and Victorian editors hurried to explain, that this woman was Vanbrugh's future wife. But at that time Henrietta Maria was only twenty, being born in October, 1693, and even Lady Mary was not quite so absurd as to describe a girl three years younger than herself as a "ruin".¹ She was more likely to be witty on the lines of "cribbed age and youth". So I think we may assume that the woman whom Vanbrugh loved in 1713 was not Henrietta but some other and older "Mrs Yarburch". Now Ann Yarburch died in childbed only nine months

¹ See p. 182. And if some are correct in thinking that the letter was written in 1710, Miss Yarburch would be only seventeen.

before the wedding, being then forty-two, and Mr Dobrée, who first drew these conclusions, believes that Vanbrugh transferred his affection from the mother to the daughter. It seems unlikely to me that Colonel Yarburgh would cherish a son-in-law who had openly flirted with his wife while she was still bearing him children, especially as he was the kind of man who cut off his eldest son with a shilling for "having very unhandsomely disposed of himself in marriage without consulting me", but then matrimonial arrangements are never easy to guess.

Heslington Hall stands to-day very much as it stood when his eldest child left it to become a bride—a red brick Elizabethan manor beside the road with tall mullioned windows, and beyond it a garden full of yews and hollies cut into fantastic shapes from geometry and everyday use, cylinders and balls and cones, loaves of bread and beehives, or else ranged into close walks leading to some arbour or bowling-green, or to a globe-sundial on a pillar, where countless gnomons throw the indicative shadow again and again. It was just such a garden as that in which Andrew Marvell fell into a dream,

Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade

Mercifully, no one at Heslington was ever up to date enough to destroy it, when later in the eighteenth century a house was only beautiful if it stood in the middle of a large, bare field, not far from an irregular sheet of grey water. Even to Vanbrugh, who was half a formal gardener himself, the Elizabethan was neither old enough to be reverend nor new enough to be correct, but he

probably thought the house a fine old-fashioned place in its way, and admired the state rooms hopefully built to entertain Queen Elizabeth, the long gallery, and the hall, with all the family faces by Lely and Kneller. They hang there to this day, but unfortunately Henrietta Maria is not among them.

Early in January Vanbrugh found to his annoyance that Newcastle had been at Nottingham after all. "I shall be very glad to find your Grace," he wrote, "less frightened with the Nottingham Storms and Precipices than I apprehend." And then he told him, by way of encouragement, much what he had told Sir Edward Southwell before—how Castle Howard was so warm that in the room most used by the family the doors and windows had to be opened for fresh air several times a day even in the bitterest weather. But man's ingratitude pierced where the winter wind could not.

I have a wild strange Acct of the rout my Friend and Superior Officer, Benson, makes at the Treasury. I find poor Daignonave scar'd out of his Wits about a Memoriall given in by Campbell and Benson the Young, to decry the Management of former Boards, and exalt this precious New One. I have no Copy of this honest Meml, so can say little to it from hence, but that I know of no fault I have committed that a Jury in Westminster hall wou'd fine me half a Crown for. Let me be but protected from any dark Stroaks in the Kings Closet, and I have nothing to fear.

He depended on Newcastle and Sunderland for that, and said so.

The next time he wrote it was from York and with only two days to his wedding. He had taken rooms at the "George" a day or two before, no doubt to make arrangements, and that evening Carlisle was coming in to give a dinner party, "and afterwards, we all go to pay Our

Respects to York, at the Assembly, Where the Ladies will muster Strong on this Occasion, Lord Carlisle being the Idol here, And well deserves their Devotions," which surely meant there would be a party from Heslington Still not a word about the marriage¹ And so on the 14th of January, 1719, they were married in the little parish church of St Lawrence, of which to-day only the tower remains Here Henrietta had been christened in the font that is still in use, and here in the previous spring her mother had been buried Vanbrugh described himself as "of Castle Howard," and Carlisle, I imagine, was best man

The honeymoon was brief, for in a week he was back at Nottingham, going into all that Newcastle had crossly arranged in his absence Meanwhile the Duke had heard the news Vanbrugh was glad that mid-winter had not prevented him "thinking it practicable to live upon a Precipice a hundred ft high," and continued,

I have no care now left, but to See the Dutchess of Newcastle as well pleas'd with it as your Grace is I hope She won't have the less expectation from my Judgment in Chusing a Seat, from my having chosen a Wife, whose principall Merit in my Eye, has been some small distant shadow, of those Valuable Qualifications in her, your Grace has formerly with so much pleasure heard me talk of

The honour she likewise has, of being pretty nearly related to the Dutchess gives me the more hopes I may not have been mistaken ¹ If I am, 'tis better however to make a Blunder towards the end of ones Life, than at the beginning of it But I hope all will be well, it can't at least be worse than most of my Neighbours, which every Modest Man ought to be content wth And So I'm easy

It seems a curiously cautious and ungallant letter from

¹ Henrietta Vanbrugh's great aunt Margaret Blagge, whose saintly life Evelyn recorded, married the great Godolphin, and was grandmother to the Lady Harriet whom Vanbrugh induced Newcastle to marry Harriet and Henrietta were thus second cousins

a man just married, but it is perfectly plain from Vanbrugh's conduct throughout that he was never passionately in love with his wife. No doubt he thought himself too old for such follies. It was a marriage (on his side, at least) of affection and sympathy, and uncommonly happy it proved, though brief. He added this postscript to his letter—

Jacob will be frightened out of his Witts and his Religion too, when he hears I'm gone at last. If he is still in France, he'll certainly give himself to God, for fear he shou'd now be ravish'd by a Gentlewoman. I was the last Man left, between him and Ruin.

Jacob Tonson, he knew, was the hardest nut to crack. He would not be suffered to escape lightly, but would have to give back joke for joke. It was July before he could make the effort to write. But by then there were six months of success behind him, and the faint shadow of a pair of horns had vanished. So he wrote—a long, delightful, affectionate letter.

Here has been so great a Slaughter of your old Friends since you went, I wish those who are left may have share enough in your Affections, to incline you to think of England with any pleasure.

I don't know whether you'll reckon me among the first or the last, since I have taken this great Leap in the Dark, Marriage. But tho' you should rate me with the former, I know at least you would be glad to know how 'tis in this (perhaps) your future State. For you have not forgot it ever was agreed, if I fell, you'd tremble. Don't be too much dismay'd however, for if there be any truth in Married Man (who I own I have ever esteem'd a very lying creature) I have not yet repented. Thus far, 'tis possible you may believe me, if I offer at more, 'tis like you won't, so I have done. Only this, That I am confirmed (as far as six months practice goes) my Old Opinion was right, That whatever there was of good or bad in Marriage, it was fitter to end Our Life with, than begin it.

You must know, whatever evils Marriage may design me, it has not yet lessen'd one grain of my Affections to an old Friend And as to the Place you are in, I am so far from being disgusted to it, by the treatment I once met with, That I think that very thing (at least the Occasion of it) has doubled a Romantick desire, of Seeing it again ¹ In short, I have it so much in my thoughts, that I have talk't even my Gentlewoman into a good disposition of being of the Party if things will fall kindly out for it, next Spring In the meantime I hope you'll make a Winter Trip to England, and after being a little pleas'd with some folks, and very weary of others, you'll find your Self ready for a fresh Expedition

Then he told him how he had been at Stowe, where Lord Cobham was engrossed in his gardens, and how he had taken Blenheim on his way back "not with any affection, (for I am thoroughly wean'd) but some curiosity," and found that the Duchess was hastily fitting up the house to receive the Duke "He is in point of health, much as usual, and I doubt not likely ever to grow better She is likewise in point of vigour as she us'd to be, and not very likely to grow worse" He told him how Newcastle was fitting up Nottingham, how that charming soldier, the Brigadier, was "at the Old Rate, Storm and Sunshine," and how in the international world "We are so quiet, the whole Regency has fallen asleep, if it had not been for a few Highlanders and Weavers" It was a moment of rich content in a troubled existence

But the jokes about Tonson continued to explode like squibs "I have just now an Account," wrote Vanbrugh to Newcastle, "That a Gentleman newly Arriv'd from Paris, actually Saw Friend Jacob in a Frock"

¹ He meant the romantic adventure that placed him in the Bastille

Chapter Seventeen

BLOODY, BUT UNBOWED

I have been so long us'd to attacks of fortune and found my Self able to bear up against them, That I think I can do so Still, tho' they cost me some Oathes and Curses, when I think of them.

VANBRUGH

BENSON was not distinguishing himself at the Board of Works. He designed some fountains for the King at Herrenhausen, and finished St. Paul's with a miserable flight of steps, afterwards expunged. Then he sent in a report that the House of Lords and the painted chamber next to it were in immediate danger of collapse. Startled, the Peers decided to sit elsewhere, but first called for a second opinion. Qualified surveyors then told them, after a thorough examination, that both rooms were perfectly sound! The Peers were furious, threatening an address to the King and even a prosecution, but Sunderland placated them by quickly bundling Benson away into the comfortable Auditorship of the Imprest. After all, he had only accepted Wren's post as a stop-gap, and even so, according to Hawksmoor, had "got more in one year (for confounding ye Kings Works) than Sr Chris Wren did in 40 years for his honest endeavours."

For the last time Vanbrugh expected promotion, and once again it escaped him. In August, 1719, Thomas Hewet, Surveyor of the Woods and Forests, and even more of a nonentity than Benson, became Surveyor. Behind the appointment there were the usual manœuvres of State, and for reasons now very obscure, Vanbrugh was actually induced to renounce his claim in favour

of Hewet, though he grumbled heartily "by way of a little Vent for ease," and hoped that his friends would contrive some respectable compensation "to help this Pill downe, which is a little Bitter, now I come just to the time (and disgrace) of Swallowing it" But it had to be swallowed, for the King still believed he had mismanaged the Board, even though the auditor allowed he had saved him £10,000 a year—whereas Benson "had not sav'd him one Shilling, So Vilely did that Gent. Impose upon the Treasury" Fortunately—"I am not one of those," he could say, "Who drop their Spirits, on every Rebuff if I had, I had been under ground long ago"

The pill was bitter, but when the painter Thornhill was advanced as a rival candidate by Benson and the Duchess of Marlborough together, Hewet seemed almost desirable

Twou'd be a pleasant Joke to the World, to See a Painter made Surveyor of the Works, in Order to Save money, When all the Small knowledge or tast they ever have of it, is only in the Great expensive part, As Columns, Arches, Bass Reliefs &c which they just learn enough of, to help fill up their Pictures But to think, that Such a Volatile Gentleman as Thornhill, Shou'd turn his thoughts & Application to the duty of a Surveyors business is a Monstruous project I'm so Sick of this Rhudiculous Story I can write no more on't

In return for his advocacy Vanbrugh felt that he could demand certain concessions, and he made a brave attempt to secure the Comptrollership for life, and a sum of money from Hewet Also it was reasonable to expect that when Benson's incompetent Clerks followed their master, Hawksmoor and the others would be restored. Naturally enough Hewet was at first all

sweetness to Vanbrugh and gave him "ten thousand-Assurances" of his good intentions towards Hawksmoor, so when Vanbrugh discovered that he was going to appoint some creature of his own, he wrote to Newcastle in the greatest indignation Hewet was a plausible fellow, he said,

and I shou'd be mighty glad, you cou'd find it agreeable to let him see, You think the great Friendship I have practis'd towards him and the Benefit he receives by it, Shou'd give me a much greater Claim upon him than what I desir'd about a Clark of the Works He will to this, Answer you in flourishes And Words of no Sincerity, nor indeed, no plain meaning, Which I hope your Grace will let him know, don't pass at all upon you But unless you tell him so plainly, he'll think they do, for that's always his presumption, that he can wheedle and blind anybody If he thinks his Shuffling and Cutting, and Professions of friendship to me, pass upon your Grace, he'll think he has me downe, and will venture to Act Yet worse by me, than he has done

But Hawksmoor would never return to the Office in Vanbrugh's lifetime except as his deputy "Poor Hawksmoor," he said, "What a Barbarous Age have his fine, ingenious Parts fallen into What wou'd Monsr Colbert in France have given for Such a Man? I don't Speak as to his Architecture alone, but the Aids he cou'd have given him, in almost all his brave Designs for the Police " He was so disgusted with the whole situation that he told Tonson,

I wish I may find means to change my Place in the Board of Works for something else, being very uneasy in it, from the Unparalleld Ingratitude of the present Surveyr, who owes his coming in entirely to me, and that in so known a manner that he has not the Confidence to deny it to anybody But he's a Son of a Whore, and I'll trouble you no more about him

And in August there had been still another reverse "a Bit of a Girl popping into the World, three months before its time And so the business is all to do over again " But Vanbrugh was no longer surprised when his honest endeavours came to nothing

The business was done over again soon enough, for on the 12th of May of the following year, 1720, Lady Vanbrugh gave birth to a son He lived, and was christened Charles, with Carlisle for a godfather Home life indeed, apart from the first disappointment, was the one abiding happiness, the one real consolation to a middle-aged man in a world that had become ungratefully harsh and cold "I have a good humour'd wife, a quiet house, and find myself as much dispos'd to be a friend and a servant to a good old acquaintance, as ever." Tonson, it appeared, had not been so desperate as to give himself to God after all, though a report had indeed arrived that he was dead Far from it, he was cheerfully roping in a comfortable fortune in Paris The birth of Charles made it impossible for Vanbrugh to take his wife on that projected trip to France, so instead, he urged on his friend the homely charms and comforts of Barn Elms "And thence it was, I always found a Tate a Tate more pleasing with you there, than I should have done at Blenheim, had the house been my own tho' without my Lady Marlborough for my Wife For one may find a great deal of Pleasure, in building a Palace for another, when one shou'd find very little, in living in't ones Self" And because the old jest was still very much alive, he continued.

I desire to make no such Correction of your Manner as to Stifle one of your Jokes upon Matrimony for tho' the Chain shou'd happen to hang a litle easy about me, (by a sort of Messissippy

good fortune), I shall always think of my Neighbours as I us'd to do And if I shou'd Chance at last to come in for a share of their dissappointments, I don't know, whether I cou'd not rouse up a Little, give the matter a new turn, and reckon, when my Joke was thrown into the Funds, I had a better Tytle, to a Little merrymment upon the Stock, than before At least, thus I always thought I cou'd do, or I had never Wedd But more of that, if it comes to the Tryal, I have only now to tell you, My Wife returns your Compliments She says she's Sorry she had not a Sister for you, but she knows them that have And if you'll give her Commission, She'll answer for't, to provide at least as well for you, as she has done for me She desires I'll tell you farther, That I have said so much to her of you, while you were alive, after you were dead, and Since you are alive again, That she knows you well enough, to desire to know you better, and therefore accepts of your dinner at Barnes, and of your promise, to accept of hers at Greenwich, where she will treat you with the best of her Good (Yorkshire) Housewifry—

Here Lady Vanbrugh seized the pen herself—

& if you will make one at cards as I understand you have often done, with much finer Ladys than I am, I give you my word that I will neither cheat nor wrangle Y^e Sermt

HAROT V

It was the time when English fortunes went rocketing as the South Sea Bubble swelled Tonson was in and advised Vanbrugh to be too At first he held back—“to tell you the Truth, I have no money to dispose of” He was still, he explained, after ten years of hard work in considerable debt over the Opera House He had lost the Surveyorship out of kindness to Wren And finally “that wicked Woman of Marl^b” was losing him “(for I now see little hopes of ever getting it) near £6,000,¹ due to me for many years Service, plague and Trouble,

¹ Later, he reduced his demand to £1,663

at Blenheim For which I think, she shou'd be hang'd " Yet as he had taken other blows, he declared, so would he take these, "tho' they cost me Some Oathes and Curses, when I think of them "

For one thing it was hard to see the Opera flourishing, and himself, the unhappy pioneer, not a penny the better for it The foreign music had taken root at last, and generally the stage was booming—"The fine Gentlemen of the Buskin ride about in their Coaches " Then there were Heydegger's Masquerades which shocked the Bishops and delighted the King, when the pit of Vanbrugh's theatre was built up level with the stage, drinks were served in the boxes, and the crowd, heat and amusement increased together One night Vanbrugh was taking his wife "She calls upon me to come away, and Says she can afford me no more time than to present her humble Service to you " And one Sunday he and Carlisle went down to dine at Canons after attending the famous morning service The Duke of Chandos had thrown open his little church, embellished by Verrio and Laguerre, only a few days before With a bodyguard of eight retired sergeants, he conducted his friends to the gallery there was a small string orchestra waiting and finally there was Handel at the organ playing one of the twelve magnificent anthems he had composed in the Duke's employment "He has very good Musick," commented Vanbrugh But Pope had another opinion—

And now the Chapel's silver bell you hear,
That summons you to all the Pride of Pray'r
Light quirks of Musick, broken and uneven,
Make the Soul dance upon a Jig to Heaven
On painted Ceilings you devoutly stare,
Where sprawl the Saints of Verrio and Laguerre

To rest, the Cushion and soft Dean invite,
Who never mentions Hell to ears polite

It is the perfect picture of the grandest kind of eighteenth century Sunday

On the 21st of February, 1721, after three years' deliberation, the Court of Exchequer decided that Marlborough must pay Everything had depended on Vanbrugh's Warrant, and luckily for him it proved that he was the Duke's agent too plainly for the Duchess to prove that he was not Declaring that his "insolence and ill-usage" was far worse than that of the South Sea directors, she immediately appealed to the House of Lords "I wonder her family don't agree to Lock her up," he said

The Duchess had tried to convince the judges that Godolphin would never have signed the Warrant if he had read it carefully, that Vanbrugh got it by a trick, and that all these years neither she nor the Duke had ever heard of it That failing, she accused Vanbrugh of perjury, and produced as evidence two papers that he had written in 1714, one to the King and one to the Treasury, at a time when he was keen to make the new government acknowledge the debt so as to prevent Strong from suing the Duke, his argument being that the State had given the house and the State must pay for it

Well, it was perfectly true that he had not taken that line before the Court of Exchequer But then much had happened since 1714 He had broken with the Duchess for good, and lost apparently his own arrears What kind of obligation could a man be under to help a woman who was out to ruin him, and who would ruin him if she won her case? He decided to put the facts before the world in a "Justification"

It was in the last fortnight of April, when he had written this, that he heard that his opponent had been writing too "This Wicked Dutchess," he told Carlisle, "has now handed a Vile manuscript about in which She abuses me as far as words, (in her way of making use of them) can go" She was circulating it among the Lords to prime them for the coming trial "As soon as I had got a Sight of it, I found I cou'd not avoid Publishing Something to clear my Self, So, as fast as I cou'd, I huddled up the Paper, I here take leave to enclose, and have sent it about to all the Lords in Towne, as well as given it to the King, Prince & Princess" It was the second part of his "Justification" introduced with the following remarks—

Since I writ the precedent Paper, I heard there was a sort of Case handed privately about, relating to this Blenheim Affair, in which my Name was pretty much us'd

I have at last got a sight of it, and find so much honest Language in it, fair stating of Facts, and right sound Reasoning from them, that one would almost swear it had been writ by a Woman Some Answer however it shall have

The Duchess's chief point was still that Godolphin had been tricked, or at least "did not know what he did" To explode this likely notion Vanbrugh had merely to add the warrants of Joynes, Boulter and Bobart to his own, already given in the earlier part There, over the great Treasurer's signature, the word might read that these officers were appointed "for and on behalf of the Duke" who had "resolv'd to erect a large Fabrick at Woodstock"

And now will any one say, my Lord Godolphin was trickt into the Warrant he sign'd to me?

Will any one be so weak to think (whatsoever they may resolve

to say) That in so many Years, and on so many fresh Occasions, to pass Warrants upon Warrants, the Duke never heard what situation, a thing of so near Affection to him was in?

Will any one believe, that in so many quiet, fireside, evening conferences, as happen'd between these two great Lords and her Grace, the manner and method of receiving in, and laying out, these hundreds of thousands of pounds, should never be part of the amusement? Sure there's some great forgetfulness in this matter

In this odd document, alive with indignation, Vanbrugh was able to score several hits

Another Question askt me is Why I did not secure myself, by desiring another Warrant, immediately under the Dukes own Hand

Had it been possible for me to doubt the truth of what I already had, under my Lord Godolphin's, I shou'd But I never thought those two Noble Lords upon a foot, of one disclaiming in a Court of Justice, what the other under his Hand, affirm'd to be true

Finally the Duchess had been so completely without sense of humour as to accuse him of ingratitude "And if at last the Charge run into by Order of the Crown must lye upon him," she wrote, referring to the Duke, "yet the Infamy of it must lye upon another, who was perhaps the only Architect in the World capable of building such a House, And the only Friend in the World capable of contriving to lay the Debt upon one to whom he was so highly oblig'd " It only remained for Vanbrugh to describe the bitterest disillusionment of his life, and there would be no dirty linen left to wash in public He did so by inventing a correspondence between a Londoner and his country friend This Londoner describes how Vanbrugh worked twelve years for the richest man in England, lost the Garter for good and the Comptrollership for a time, on his account, and at last, without one single reward in patronage or money (apart

from a mere trifle) "has been left to work upon his own bottom, at the tedious Treasury, for a Recompence for his Services"

On the 24th of May, 1721, the Lords rejected the appeal by a vote of 41 to 25. The decrepit Duke and his wife were both present, and had the pleasure of seeing their own family voting against them. For the Duchess had quarrelled with Sunderland, and was even said to be in league with the Pretender—a story which Vanbrugh was by then quite ready to believe. It was good to see her discomfited, but he knew that his evidence had made it even more unlikely that his own £1,663 would ever be paid. "All the good I have from this Decree is, That I am now safe from being pull'd to pieces by the Workmen." It was cold comfort, for with characteristic lack of judgment he had involved himself in the South Sea affair at about the time when the Duchess, against everyone's advice, was selling out. As a result, his humble fortune was reduced by £2,000, and the Marlborough millions were increased by £100,000.

However, he was free at last to set out on another northern progress, and this time he determined, "tho' much oppos'd by wise Women," that Henrietta should bring with her the baby Charles, not quite fourteen months old, "for I have a mind to make him as much a Yorkshire man as I can, besides he's so Stout, I think he may travel any where." In a coach piled with luggage the family left London on the evening of the 6th of July and moved in a leisurely way up the Great North Road, stopping on the way for a night or two with some friends, and then with Colonel Yarbrough at Heslington. Finally they reached Castle Howard, and Vanbrugh was more delighted than ever with what he saw. His letters to

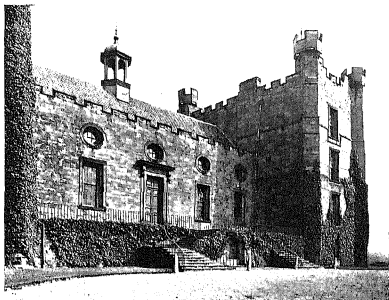
Carlisle between 1700 and 1720 have all been lost, but those that he had been writing in 1721 are full of schemes for the gardens a correct pillar to be placed in the parterre with an army of obelisks around it rude objects like the Satyr Gate to be kept for "other parts of the Garden, more retir'd and Solemn," where, in defiance of Lord Burlington, fluted obelisks might be simply "Scatter'd up and down the Woods " In a warm August (how often he had seen it in snow or hurricane) Castle Howard was already to his mind,

the Top Seat and Garden of England Of the House I say nothing, The others I may commend, because Nature made them, I pretend to no more Merrit in them than a Midwife who helps to bring a fine Child into the World, out of Bushes Boggs, and Bryars

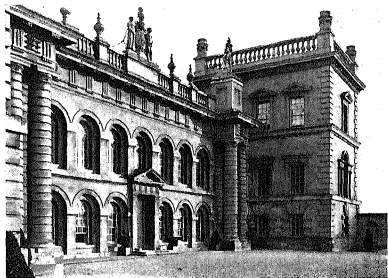
From the pleasures of creation he returned to York for a social week—"A Race every day, and a Ball every night, with as much well look'd Company, as ever I saw got together The Ladies I mean in Chief As to the Men, the Duke of Wharton was the Top Gallant " And in that there was a certain embarrassment, for the Duke, not content with voting on the Marlborough side, had protested in the House against the "Justification" However, when he came to Castle Howard, Vanbrugh was able to write, "we have jok't off the Affair of the House of Lords on both Sides " A joke and a good heart disarmed all Sarah's allies, from Mr Boulter to the amorous Duke

But such a crowd of fellow guests was not to his liking, and he set out in his coach for a farther north that now signified, to him, Seaton Delaval and Lumley and possibly Floors ¹ The four great towers of Lumley stand in

¹ See Appendix I, p 298



LUMLEY CASTLE, *the Entrance Front as Vanbrugh altered it.*



GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE, *the Entrance Front rebuilt by Vanbrugh.*

the rolling landscape beyond Durham, and Lord Lumley (afterwards Scarbrough) was another Whig who had asked him to modernise his mediæval home. Vanbrugh approved of the romantic stronghold.

Lumley Castle is a Noble thing, and well deserves the Favours Lord Lumley designs to bestow upon it, In order to which, I stay'd there near a Week, to form a General Design for the whole, Which consists, in altering the House both for State, Beauty and Convenience.

"State, Beauty and Convenience" both the choice and the ordering of the three requirements are significant, so different from Palladio's "*L'Utile—La Perpetuità—La Bellezza*", or from Sir Henry Wotton's "*Well building hath three Conditions Commoditie, Firmeries, and Delight*." There are those who regret that Vanbrugh's principles were ever applied to Lumley, yet certain alterations simply have to be made, if a building designed for war is to remain appropriate in peace. Here were no convenient rooms, no stairs, no entrance and no windows, as contemporary England understood these things. So Vanbrugh created his modern interior, employing no doubt the stuccoists who had worked for him at Castle Howard. But on the outside he left alone the battlements and turrets, only altering the windows, and creating an admirable west front, with a plain classical door. A more restrained and sensitive treatment could hardly have been devised.

One week was all he could spare to Lumley, for two at least must be given to Seaton Delaval, where from the building accounts we know that work had begun in the spring of 1720. Two years before, he had promised the Admiral that if he could not come himself

he would "recommend a man at York who understands these matters" He meant William Etty, his valuable assistant at Castle Howard, and in due course he entrusted him with the supervision of the work, since he himself could only travel the three hundred miles of bad road once a year at the most, and then perhaps stay only for a fortnight Now Etty was sometimes away for long periods too, and so it often happened that the only person of any authority on the site was Mr Mewburn, the Admiral's agent

Mr Mewburn was painstaking and honest He kept the building accounts in an exquisitely small and regular hand, and he spent many hours frowning over Vanbrugh's plans in an effort to see what they meant But what Mr Mewburn could not stand was that Etty, a subordinate, no better than himself, should treat him as an inferior "I cannot bear," he told the admiral, "when any wrong is put upon me, so if Mr Etty does offer any such things, Your Honr may be assured I shall speak my mind freely" It seems there was a pretty stiff rivalry "Mr Etty takes the Managing of the Draines to himself (as I perceive by his Letter), but must begg his pardon a Little in that Matter, for Your Brother Knows and forty more, that they were well advanced before he came to Seaton" Unfortunately Mr Mewburn was not really well equipped to try conclusions with an architect "The Groyning, which Mr Etty mentions in his Letter," he wrote, "I think is a terme of Art, which is Arching of the Passage, as I apprehend him"

And so the building was begun, and a stairway parapet would end in a column, cut out like a piece of jigsaw to fit the base, and a vase would have to choose

between the centre of the sky-line and the centre of the pier that should support it And Vanbrugh seems to have designed the house on one day and the forecourt wings on the next, not caring if two kinds of rustication fought a battle in the corners, nor if an impost dived into one side of a pilaster never to appear again But I think when we look at all the palpable errors that mar a magnificent design, we must not forget those weeks when the sea wind howled round the unfinished entablature and furrowed the young trees in the avenue, and Mr Mcwburn was left alone to muse upon terms of art

Vanbrugh was three weeks in the north "finding a vast deal to do, both at Delaval's and Lumley The Admiral," he said, "is very Gallant in his operations, not being dispos'd to starve the Design at all So that he is like to have a very fine Dwelling for himself, now, and his Nephew &c hereafter " However in the following year he fell off his horse after dinner and died, and so it was for Sir Francis Blake Delaval that Vanbrugh finished the house He returned to Castle Howard for a while, and then by easy stages to London "If I had had good weather in this Expedition," he said, "I shou'd have been well enough diverted in it, there being many more Valluable and Agreeable things and Places to be Seen, than in the Tame Sneaking South of England " And as usual the south had its store of worries for him He learnt that the Duchess had now opened a case in the Court of Chancery "against every body that was ever concern'd in the Building of Blenheim downe to the poorest workman " She was going to enter into every detail of the work, and make them prove every item of their claims So Vanbrugh asked Joynes and Bobart to call and "talk a little together before any of our Answers are given,

as else perhaps we may all make Some mistakes after
so many Years " It was wise

But before anything could be settled the Duke had
a third stroke at Windsor Lodge He lay for five days
paralysed, perfectly conscious, and died in the early
morning of the 15th of June, 1722, being seventy-two
It is pleasant to think that much of his last three years
had been spent at Blenheim, unfinished as it was, for to
him it was always the symbol of his dazzling victories,
the house he had wanted He played cards, he drove
quietly about the garden, to his many motherless grand-
children he was the awe-inspiring old gentleman who sat
watching them at their dancing lessons, and who asked
them for a second and third performance of *All for
Love*, strictly bowdlerised by the Duchess, who allowed
no kissing to the youthful Cleopatra and Antony

This heap of stones, which Blenheim's palace frame,
Rose in this form, a mon'ment to thy name,
This heap of stones must crumble into sand,
But thy great name shall through all ages stand

So he had heard a child's voice proclaiming, and he must
have known that it was true

The death of the great Duke aroused the architect in
Vanbrugh, where it could no longer arouse the friend
He told Carlisle that he had written to the executors,
suggesting "what your Ldship designs at Castle Howard,
and has been practic'd by the most polite peoples before
Priestcraft got poor Carcases into their keeping, to make
a little money of," in other words, a Mausoleum

The Place I propose, is in Blenheim Park with some plain, but
magnificent & durable monument over him Sure if ever any Such

thing as erecting Monuments in open places was right, it wou'd be so in this Case But I fancy the Dutchess will prevent his lying near her, tho' twou'd not make her very melancholy neither

Did he really imagine that the Duchess would ask him to design it? But in any case she preferred to spend her money in another way

Here is a Pompous funeral preparing I don't know whether it won't cost her Ten Thousand pounds What a Noble monument wou'd that have made, whereas this Idle Show, will be gone in half an hour, and forgot in Two days The other, wou'd have been a Show, and a Noble one, to many future Ages

The Duchess's show was like many of later date First came military bands, troops and heralds and artillery then the Duke's body on a gun-carriage beneath a martial canopy of plumes, trophies and heraldic devices Mourners and statesmen followed, and behind them again the long line of coaches, including those of the King and the Prince of Wales The route was much the same as that of a modern national procession—from Marlborough House (where he had lain in state) up Constitution Hill, and so by Piccadilly and Charing Cross to the Abbey, with crowds lining the whole way In Henry the Seventh's Chapel, advancing to the mouth of the tomb, Garter King of Arms recited his honours and titles "Thus it has pleased Almighty God," he cried, "to take out of this transitory world, into His mercy, the most high, mighty, and noble prince, John, Duke of Marlborough" Clarenceux, it was observed, was *not* there

Clearly that was the Duchess's arrangement, for Vanbrugh would never have carried hatred so far, nor was it the Duke that he hated But when the Will was made public, his indignation must have been shared by certain others in the building trade Marlborough had

left, it appeared, well over two million pounds—"And yet this Man wou'd neither pay his Workmen their bills nor his Architect his Salary But he had given his Widdow (may a Scotch Ensign get her) £10,000 a Year, to Spoil Blenheim her own way, £12,000 a Year to keep her Self clean, and go to Law " Once the Duke had been his hero, but that was a long time ago

The old idolatries had perished, and there was not one hope that had been really fulfilled More and more he looked to his private life for compensation "I am now two Boys Strong in the Nursery," he said, "but am forbid getting any more this Season for fear of killing my Wife A Reason that in Kit Cat days wou'd have been stronger for it, than against it But let her live, for she's Special good, as far as I know of the Matter " There was a chance, he told Carlisle, that the King might at last do something to help him,

tho' not as an Architect, which is not a Trade I believe for any body to recommend themselves by at Court However, I fancy your Lordship's Godson will be a Professor that way, for he knows Pillars & Arches and Round Windows & Square Windows already, whether he finds them in a Book or in the Streets, and is much pleas'd with a House I am building him in the Field at Greench it being a Tower of White Bricks, only one Room and a Closet on a floor He talks every thing, is much given to Rhyming, and has a Great turn to dry joking What these Seeds may grow to, God knows, they being of a kind, that may do his business, uphill, or downe hill, so perhaps upon the whole, he were as well without them

That was the opinion of a man, successful in the eyes of the world, whose career was drawing to an end For by 1722 all but one of the great Vanbrugh houses had been designed And yet not one had been finished Castle Howard after twenty-two years still kept him as busy as

Seaton Delaval after three, for once a Whig patron had begun to build, nothing but death or bankruptcy would stop him. Eastbury, too, was designed quite a year before Seaton Delaval, yet Bubb Dodington immediately plunged so deep into politics that he did not begin his main block until 1724, by which time Sir Francis Blake Delaval had almost finished his, complaining "the expense is by far too great and will make me very inconvenient." Thus the order of execution was not always the order of invention.

The "New Design for a Prison of Quality in Dorset" is probably, as I have said, an abandoned scheme for Eastbury, and is a curious invention, of which the dominating feature is a pair of vast archways on the roof to contain the chimney-stacks. It cannot be called a very successful design, but whether it was abandoned on that account or merely because it was too big is open to question. Without doubt Vanbrugh immensely improved on this early scheme in the house that came to be built. Six Doric columns ringed in the manner of the Kensington Orangery and Blenheim composed a portico, and on the garden front the order appeared again, this time without a pediment. Four towers boldly projecting from the corners broke the skyline about a central mass—an arrangement already used in mightier proportions at Blenheim. Inside, sumptuous ornament could go no further, and though Bubb Dodington sometimes wished he could find "half a score of pictures at £1,000 apiece," yet there was a Thornhill over his head, and he was "rarely seated," it was said, "but under painted ceilings and gilt entablatures." Such was the building that Lord Temple's gunpowder transformed into a cloud of obliterating dust.

Chapter Eighteen

RIPENESS IS ALL

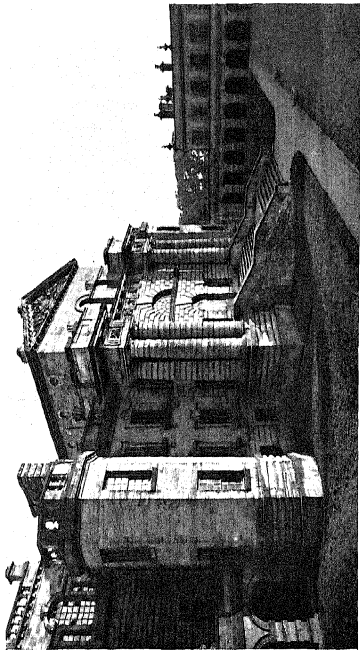
*What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all.*

KING LEAR

WHEN Vanbrugh arrived on the desolate coast of Northumberland to visit Admiral Delaval for the first time, he found there the perfect situation for another classical fortress. But the Admiral was not rich by the standards of Bubb Dodington, and his castle had to be built at a fraction of the cost of Eastbury. So at the end of a forecourt twice as deep as Dodington's, he placed a house half as big. There are only three rooms on the main floor, one on each side of the hall, and one opposite extending the whole seventy-five feet of the garden front. With architecture reduced to a kind of abstract sculpture, it is surely the most imaginative house he ever invented, and within a few years¹ it became, in the words of a contemporary, "the rising glory of the North," and one could stand on the north steps and look out over sixty miles of Northumberland framed by classical pavilions and "terminated by the august mountains of Cheviot."

In this extraordinary house on a windy hill with an unkind sea at its foot, there came to live an equally extraordinary family. They were the "gay Delavals," the most charming, mischievous, spendthrift people in the North of England, utterly without morals, loved by

¹ The dates 1721 and 1729 are scratched on the balustrade of the N.W. tower.



SEATON DELAVAL, the Entrance Front, and part of the West Wing.

the people of the countryside and damned from birth. But it was left to the second Sir Francis, son of Vanbrugh's employer, to give the house its national reputation. "The gayest and most accomplished Lothario of his age," for twenty years he filled it with his friends and entertained them in his own hilarious fashion. There were fêtes and masquerades, rope-dancers and dancing bears, "Tilts, tournaments, tumblings and Bull-baitings." And then he would invite the peasantry to "Whimsical entertainments—such as a puppet show, a grinning match and a shift race by women." Above all, he loved to contrive elaborate practical jokes. Beds would turn turtle and flop their struggling occupants into cold baths. Walls would disappear and leave a male and female guest staring at each other in different acts or stages of undress. At last there was no money left to contrive anything. All Delavals, it was said, were under a curse to die violent or unnatural deaths. The Admiral fell off a horse in the avenue, his nephew staggered out drunk into Vanbrugh's portico and fell into the garden, one of his great-nephews fell down in a stroke in Pall Mall, the other died eating his breakfast. Finally, his great-great-nephew, a boy of nineteen and the last of the line, was kicked in a vital organ by the girl he was trying to seduce. So ended a name and a great tradition.

No less violent an end awaited the house that had enshrined this erring and beautiful race in the errors and beauty of its stone. On the 3rd of January, 1822, a fire was lit in a room so little used, that jackdaws had built their nests in the chimney. The rubbish flared up, the flames spread to an exposed beam, and by four in the afternoon the whole roof was ablaze. The heat became

so intense that the glass in the windows melted and the lead streamed from the cornices like rain. To ships at sea, as darkness fell, the heaving billows of brown became edged with crimson. Beneath them a great crowd was collecting, but only to gape, while the fire ate down through the red and green damask rooms to Vercelli's festive ceiling in the saloon. By nine the forecourt wings had been saved, but the house was a fuming shell.

To-day Seaton Delaval is a far more fantastic place than the Delavals ever dreamed of. In the middle of a Victorian mining street stand Vanbrugh's gate-posts, and beyond them stretches the avenue. Half way down, there is the pedestal of a column, a level crossing, and a signal box, then the road sweeps round in front of the house. At first glance you would think it occupied, so well has the exterior withstood five hours of heat and a century of cold. Then, it may be, your eye would be caught by the black spot of a broken window pane, betraying all. For years the shell remained roofless, while in the niches of the hall the six stucco ladies¹, who had been stripped of their draperies by fire, were subjected to every kind of outrage by the weather. At last a roof was put on and the windows were glazed. But the pigeons have never been evicted, and the sound of a single footstep throws twenty wings into panic in the darkness overhead. Clapping and soughing together they whirl through the rooms and corridors like damned souls, spattering once again the leaves of a fallen capital or the brittle ironwork of a staircase. "Methinks," said Young Fashion in *The Relapse*, "the Seat of our Family looks like Noah's Ark, as if the chief part on't were design'd for the Fowls of the Air." Underneath their

¹ Music, Painting, Geography, Sculpture, Architecture and Astronomy

excrement, and their dead, a marble pavement lies buried

To retreat from the horrible softness of that carpet and stand on the north steps with Bedlam subsiding behind one, is to feel a kind of madness oneself. Seaton Delaval has upset time. With its lead groups, its orangery and obelisk, it is in the wrong century, a derelict. Round it the windy landscape has acquired a different gaiety—chimneys, steam, far pyramids of slag, by night, the shaking flares of furnaces. Few go to see it, though it faces a public way within a few miles of the Great North Road, and before long may not exist to be seen. For in spite of the care of its owners, disaster will overwhelm this ruin that is the crowning ornament of an English style, if steps are not shortly taken to save it. Wired to a column of the chipped and blackened garden front a notice-board proclaims, THIS PORTICO IS DANGEROUS.

At the end of July, 1723, Vanbrugh heard from Grimsthorpe that the Duke of Ancaster was dead. "My Old Friend & Ally the Great Chamberlain is at last gone. But I think the Son he has left, will prove the best Sovereign that has Sate upon that Throne." He thought so still, next month at Castle Howard, when he wrote again to Newcastle. "I have been drinking Waters at Scarborough three or four days, and am to return thither with Lord Carlisle, for a Weeks Swigging more, And soon after that I point towards London. But Shall wait upon his new Grace of Ancaster in my way, having the honour of an Invitation from him, to consult about his Building, by which I believe he is inclin'd to go on upon the General Design I made for his Father last Winter and which was approv'd of by himself."

Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire, like Lumley and Kim-

bolton, was another hotch-potch of a castle, medieval, Tudor and Stuart at once, and Vanbrugh's "General Design" was to destroy and rebuild it, keeping to the old four-sided plan. The scheme appeared in the third volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* two years later, but already, perhaps, three-quarters of it had been abandoned. Yet even if the design had not been published, the one part of it carried out would entitle Grimsthorpe to a place among the finest works of its creator.

Vanbrugh's revision of the old eccentric plan was simple but efficient. On the main floor a continuous gallery would surround three sides of the courtyard with ranges of rooms looking out on three fronts. The entire centre of the fourth front from ground to roof would be devoted to an entrance hall joined to the gallery by stairs at each end, and flanked by massive towers. This was the range he had built and Thornhill had embellished, when exhaustion of funds, or his death, or both, put an end to the new Castle and saved from destruction the picturesque chimneys and gables of the old. The pedigree of that front is not difficult to trace. Just as Seaton Delaval descended from Eastbury and the "New Design," so Grimsthorpe from Lumley and Seaton Delaval. Lumley decided the plan—four tremendous towers with the intervening ranges on the main fronts deeply recessed. In fact so closely are the two castles related that Grimsthorpe may be described as a Baroque version of Lumley.¹ But Vanbrugh could no longer content himself, as once at Kimbolton, with the ancient type of plan that offered so little scope for the quality of "movement." He had built always on one of two plans—the medieval, or the modern, the enclosed

¹ Compare the illustrations facing p. 264.

court, or the forecourt, the one imposed by circumstances, the other chosen and developed by himself. Finally at Grimsthorpe he combined the two. He threw out a forecourt and placed at either end of a wrought iron screen those little pavilions that so charmingly reflect the great towers of the house.

If you imagine the wings of Seaton Delaval with the upper story removed and the arcades turned to niches in a wall, you have already, without altering the pavilions, a fair model for this court. Of course the two houses are united more obviously than that, by the splendid solecism of the double columns.¹ Actually these are not quite as pointless as they appear—thrusting Baroque rapes into the sky—for they mark the double arcading inside, which separates the entrance hall from the staircases. Unless the great room at Claremont equalled it, that hall is certainly the noblest room that Vanbrugh ever designed, well-proportioned, light, yet extremely dignified. The hall at Blenheim is gross beside it, the hall at Castle Howard too high to be called perfect, in spite of its real magnificence, while nearly all his state rooms are unworthy of the fronts they look out of, poor in size, and again uncomfortably high.

For Vanbrugh to make a façade so eloquent of a plan was new, and it led him to a further novelty. Always hitherto the emphatic point in his designs, from the cupola of Castle Howard to the pediment of Seaton Delaval, had been the centre. But at Grimsthorpe,

¹ A solecism, because Doric columns can only be coupled by destroying the proportions of the frieze. If the metopes are square the bases will lock. At Seaton Delaval, Vanbrugh tried to slur over the makeshift by applying the same kind of relief to all the metopes alike. At Grimsthorpe he boldly emphasised the variation by confining his relief to the two wider metopes. There is variation too, it may be observed, at the Kensington Orangery. But it was this kind of thing that earned him the Palladians' contempt.

through the influence of Lumley, I believe, the centre is deliberately unimportant and the emphasis divided between the towers and columns, giving the front an extraordinary feeling of repose. And at the same time the details, however carelessly constructed, betray a new and unmistakable influence.

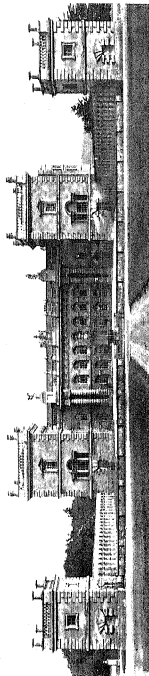
I have already described how the school of fashionable purists led by Lord Burlington captured the citadel of architecture, the Office of Works, and sealed the doom of the Baroque school of Wren. Vanbrugh understood the political issue—a matter of posts and dismissals—as well as anybody, but the æsthetic issue cannot then have been so clear. Nor must it be over-simplified now. He was himself a keen student of Palladio. He had subscribed to Dubois' edition of the famous books, and from an earlier edition had taken his bridge at Castle Howard, as I have shown. Dubois and Colin Campbell were hand in glove, and both had become his colleagues, together with many others who thought the principles of the master little short of divine, offering as they so conveniently did "the necessary Rules for raising the plainest buildings, as well as the most adorn'd." Moreover there were young architects, Kent and Gibbs¹, who made a decalogue of those principles, and a young satirist, Pope, who skinned and anointed with acid anyone who dared to disagree. So it is not surprising that Vanbrugh himself was affected.

There had already been signs of it at Eastbury and Seaton Delaval, but such as would hardly be important were it not for Grimsthorpe. At Grimsthorpe not only are the windows in the towers scrupulously "correct", but the entire garden front, where he repeated the towers

¹ The movement of Gibbs' style was away from Wren and towards Palladio.



SEATON DELAVAL, the Forecourt.



GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE, the Forecourt.

with a plain Corinthian portico between them, is so dutifully Palladian in decorum that some writers have doubted its authenticity. But we cannot reject a design merely because it disturbs our preconceptions. After all, Vanbrugh was alive when Campbell inscribed his name on the four plates and reaffirmed it in the commentary—"All designed by Sir John Vanbrugh." And in fact, though there is none of his Baroque audacity about the elevation, yet for every part of it, taken singly, his work provides a precedent or a parallel.¹ An elevation it remains however, and Vanbrugh's Gimmsthorpe is only a fragment. But in that fragment we see that he had passed beyond the disturbing originality of Seaton Delaval to something even more mature, the grandeur that proceeds, not from violence, but from repose.

His last building of importance seems to have been the Temple at Castle Howard with the four Ionic porticos and the dome.² It may occur to the reader that this brief description would apply equally well to the Villa Capra in Italy, and the association is not without point. Vanbrugh had turned to Palladio again, for a model much idolised by Burlington, Kent and the rest. But whereas they, content in apostolic fervour to imitate, constructed Mereworth, Chiswick and Foot's Clay, he borrowed no more than the idea, and evolved in the purer manner of his final work that engaging ornament which is so much his own.

However, Carlisle was not so keen on an expensive classical building. Some rustic affair of rubble he thought would do equally well. So he wrote to Hawksmoor about

¹ Thus he designed an equally pure portico for the garden front at Seaton Delaval, and another for the Temple at Castle Howard, while similar windows had been used at Eastbury and Blenheim.

² See illustration facing p. 224.

it, and Hawksmoor sent him in two sketches, or what he called "scizzas," the curious little objects that he proposed, but took pains not to appear in competition with his colleague

I send you this for your amusement, for I know Sr J Vanbrugh is for a Temple of smooth free stone with a portico each way and Dom'd over ye center, & it would undoubtedly do beyond all objection, but as yr Lordship desired a draft of one, made of ye common Wall stone, I have drawn this accordingly, and this might be changed 100 severall ways, if one had time and health

It might indeed, and still never be worthy of the important eminence it would crown Hawksmoor would always listen to the demands of his client, Vanbrugh would only listen to the demands of his art it is the eternal difference between the small artist and the great "I still flatter my Self, nothing of this plain or Gothick Sort will be determin'd on at last," wrote Vanbrugh, and by February, 1724, Carlisle had been convinced However, he still cherished an idea of concealing poor materials in rustication, and this had to be gently squashed "As to husbanding the Stone by Rusticks, it might be done, but tho' I am a very great Lover of Rusticks, I do not think they wou'd by any means do in this Case, the whole turn of the Design being of the more delicate kind" When in April Vanbrugh posted the working drawings to Etty, his opinion had prevailed in everything

Yet there was one perpetual difference in which he could not prevail Nothing would induce Carlisle to leave off building elegant temples and finish his house This worried the two architects considerably, as well it might, for already Thomas Robinson was strolling round, pointing out in his irritating way that the south-

east wing was too short and that there was no architrave in the hall entablature. The young man had just returned from Italy, full of the new ideas. One visit, when he and Vanbrugh met, they stood, according to Horace Walpole, "spitting and swearing at one another." So Vanbrugh would rouse the Earl with visions of a finished house, and all would seem well, and then after a silence would come the sad, the scolding comment "I am sorry to find by a Letter yesterday from Mr Etty, your Ldp is going on with the Temple instead of the West Wing." Carlisle was bored with his west wing. He was wondering whether the arches on either side of his forecourt were enough, or whether there ought not to be a grand one in the middle.

But to Blenheim at last we should have to return even if only because it remains, when all has been said, Vanbrugh's greatest work both in size and importance, the palace which he himself would have called his masterpiece. In the Court of Chancery the Duchess, contesting every penny of the workmen's claims, had acquired a very useful friend in the Lord Chancellor Macclesfield. "Acquired" is perhaps the best word, for in the following year Lord Macclesfield was convicted of bribery and embezzlement on a lavish scale, and ended his unpopular career with a short visit to the Tower. To his sorrow, he could not overrule the decision of the Lords, but he did not hesitate to set at nought the warrant on which that decision had been based. Vanbrugh had not been working for the Duke, but for the Queen. Consequently he had no claim on the Duke's estate.

It was an Honour to him to have the making of this Fabrick. And it seems to me that Sir John Vanbrugh expected his Reward another way than by money. He thought the interest and power of the Noble

Family he was concerned for, which he could make use of towards procuring him a place or something of that kind, was a sufficient recompense for his Service. As no doubt it was of great Advantage to him. And he called his £400 a year which was allowed him a Gratuity. And a Gratuity is quite another thing than a Salary.

Vanbrugh knew all about the advantages. The point was, if he had been working, after all, for the Queen and not for the Duke, he could never go to law with the Duchess to get his £1,663. And in fact Macclesfield put him under a perpetual injunction not to, but thought it was too much to expect him to pay back what he had already received (which the Duchess, naturally, demanded). Satisfied with this decision she brought back her case in a new form to the House of Lords.

As Vanbrugh put it, she had been left £10,000 a year for five years "to spoil Blenheim her own way", and to her eternal credit she did nothing of the kind. Hating the plans only less than their author, she employed Hawksmoor to carry them out with scrupulous care, and showed her usual economy by completing the work in less than the appointed time and for half the money provided. £300,000 was finally spent—one-fifth by the Duke and four-fifths by the nation,—not so mean a present after all.

Vanbrugh naturally wanted to see the finished product, with the new archway into Woodstock and the Duke's monument by Rysbrack—to see what kind of a job Hawksmoor had made of the Gallery. And one day an opportunity occurred. In June, 1725, Carlisle was in London with his daughter and "had a mind in his way back to Castle Howard, to oblige them with a Tour, in which they might see some fine places that wou'd entertain them." Now for "a good agreeable Expedition"

of that kind you could not have a better guide than Vanbrugh, so they brought him along too, with his wife, and allowed him to plan the route. In a leisurely way, because "twas agreed not to Stunt them in time, a piece of husbandry that usually spoils all Journeys of Pleasure," he showed them Shotover with his scheme of woods and waters, took them to Oxford for a few days, and then to Woodstock. What happened there he afterwards described to Tonson.

We Stay'd Two Nights in Woodstock, My Lord and the Ladys having a mind to View Blenheim in every part with leisure. But for my own Share, There was an order to the Servants, under her Graces own hand, not to let me enter any where. And lest that shou'd not mortify me enough, She having some how learn'd, that my wife was of the Company sent an Express the Night before we came there with orders, if she came with the Castle Howard Ladys, the Servants shou'd not Suffer her to see either House, Gardens, or even to enter the Park, which was obey'd accordingly, and She was forc'd to Sit all day and keep me Company at the Inn.

In those hours of furious boredom his soul reached the bottom of its one unrelenting hatred. He would never see Blenheim whole. He had his Pisgah sight of it down the years, and that was the end. Whether he showed much better taste in trying to, than the Duchess in shutting out his wife, is doubtful. But such an affront clearly needed an explanation, not indeed to Vanbrugh, but to Lord Carlisle. So the Duchess dictated one, to her secretary.

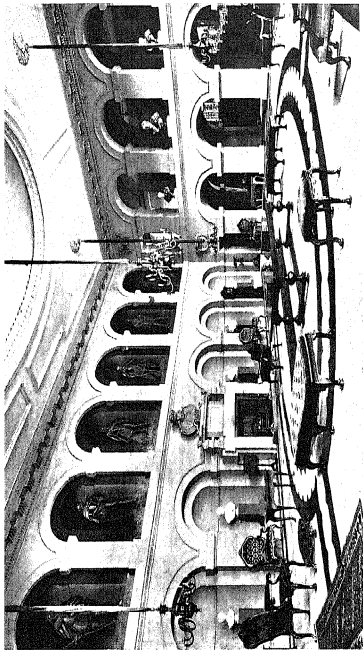
MY LORD,

I shall allways take it for a Great honour when ever your Lordship will give yourself the trouble to see anything that belongs to me, but it is a great while since I have given directions to all my

servants never to suffer Sr John Vanbrugh to come into my house or park I should not do this upon the worthlessness of his Character nor for any of the Abuses in ye building occasioned by him, but in the life of the Duke of Marlborough he had the impudence to print a Libel both of him and me for which his bones ought to have been broke, but I do not think it worth the trouble of giving any directions about such a fellow, who by it added to the contempt every body had for him before and did not hurt me, besides this, his behaviour was so saucy to me both in his letters and everything that he said to me and of me that one should wonder at any other person after such proceedings should desire to come within my walls, I am sure your Lord^p would not suffer such a one to come within yours if there were any person capable of such behaviour as Sir John had had to me and therefore I am confident that you have either never heard of it or forget it

While this torrent of hatred was streaming from the old woman's lips too fast for punctuation, the tourists were on the road to Stowe, rallying their spirits by "eating a Chearfull Cold Loaf at a very humble Ale-house, I think the best meal I ever eat, except the first Supper in the Kitchen at Barnes" They passed through Brackley, where a year before Lord Percival had written this letter to his brother-in-law

Yesterday we saw Lord Cobham's house, which within these five years has gained the reputation of being the finest seat in England—the gardens, by reason of the good contrivance of the walks, seem to be three times as large as they are They contain but twenty-eight acres, yet took us up two hours It consists of a great number of walks terminated by summer houses, and heathen temples, and adorn'd with statues cast from the Anticks You think twenty times you have no more to see, and of a sudden find yourself in some new garden or walk, as furnish'd and adorn'd as that you left Nothing is more irregular in the whole, nothing more regular in the parts, which totally differ the one from the other Bridgeman laid out the ground and planned the whole, which cannot fail of recommending him to business



GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE, the Hall.

It is unlikely that Bridgeman dictated to Vanbrugh where his temples should stand,—but the question of authorship has already been considered. The visitors found Stowe so delightful that most of them stayed a fortnight. “I had much ado to leave it at all,” Vanbrugh told Tonson, and continued,

You may believe me when I tell you, you were often talk’d of both during the Journey, and at Stowe, and our former Kit-Cat days were remembered with pleasure. We were one night reckoning who was left, and both Ld Carlisle & Cobham express a great desire of having one meeting next Winter, if you come to Towne, Not as a Club, but old Friends that have been of a Club, and the best Club, that ever met.

It seems that next November the remnant of those ageing revellers did actually meet for a “day of Happy Remembrance.” But Addison, Garth and Halifax were gone, with many others. Congreve was hopelessly bed-ridden and blind. Feeling perhaps that he might not long survive them, Vanbrugh sensibly decided to sell out of heraldry while he had the chance. “Through great difficultys and very odd oppositions from very odd folks,” he told Tonson, “I got leave to dispose in earnest of a Place I got in jest, Clarx King of Arms, and I sold it well.” In others words he received £2,400 from Knox Ward for something that had cost him nothing. The odd opposition came no doubt from the College, who saw in Ward only another ignoramus, and one not nearly so pleasant. But before the deed was done he had had his portrait painted for the last time, with the emblem of Clarenceux on his massive chest. It is a large middle-aged man that looks out of Richardson’s canvas, with firm regard and double chin, a great bull of a man, gentle-hearted and fierce at once, and holding in his

beautiful fingers, with careless pride, a half-rolled plan of Blenheim

But Blenheim that made him proud had also shamed him By trying to enter its alien gates he had made the worst blunder of an entire campaign He had played into the enemy's hands and taken his wife along to share the drubbing And now the Tories were chuckling to each other, "ye Dutchman may not visit his own Child, who, however he may appear a meer lump and mishapen to others, may seem beautifull in his eyes that begot him " To the world it definitely appeared that the Duchess had laughed last

And then suddenly Vanbrugh had his revenge He persuaded Walpole to pay him his whole debt out of the £30,000 still waiting for Blenheim, deducting it from the source, before any of the money could come into the Duchess's hands It was a triumph, and on the 25th of October, 1725, he wrote of it to Tonson

Since being forc'd into Chancery, by that B B B B old B the Dutchess of Marlbh I say since my hands were tyed up, from trying by Law to recover my Arrear, I have prevail'd with Sr Rob Walpole to help me, in a Scheme I propos'd to him, by which I have got my money in Spight of the Huzzys teeth, and that out of a Sum, She expected to receive into her hands, and of which She resolv'd I shou'd never have a farthing My carrying this point enrages her much, and the more, because it is of considerable weight in my Small Fortune, which she had hearuly endeavour'd so to destroy, as to throw me into an English Bastille to finish my days, as I began them, in a French one

And so the story of Blenheim ended in a victory for Vanbrugh But little time was left him to enjoy it For many years his health had been far from good There had been the "blisters" of 1718, and long before that he

had made his first trip to Scarborough, so many times repeated. But all the swigging in the world could not give him a good constitution, and in spite of a solid appearance and comparative youth he was no match in strength for the diminutive and delicate-seeming Wren, who had worked until he was eight-six and died when he was ninety, only two years before. In those two years Vanbrugh's health, declining rapidly, had seriously worried him. Sometimes it was all he could do to drag himself to work, and at the beginning of 1724 he was laid up at Scotland Yard for over a month. What he suffered from is not clear, but in September, 1725, it was an attack of asthma, a complaint that was then almost impossible to treat. "But if I can't cure that," he said, dismissing it characteristically, "I will however try once more to cure London Streets", for at that time he had a Paving Bill before Parliament.

It seems, however, that the final attack was brief and unexpected. On the 8th of March, 1726, he wrote his last letter to Lord Carlisle, and although referring to the sudden death of an old Kit-Cat member, the Duke of Kingston—"something like the Twisting of the Gutts, I take it to be"—he did not refer at all to his own health. The letter chiefly concerned the Temple at Castle Howard. "If your Ldp has a mind to extend the area from a Cube of 20ft to one of 22, it needs have no regard to the Columns, or other parts of the Architecture, which will all do as they stand at Present." What sentence could better summarise the Vanbrugh way of building! And in the end a cube of more than twenty-six feet was built.

On the 12th of March he attended his last meeting at Greenwich Hospital, and a few days later in London

developed quinsy One could have wished the "sweet-natured gentleman" who had done so little evil in the world a more comfortable journey out if it, than by way of that acute tonsillitis in which the temperature rises quickly and the voice becomes blurred and strange, until it is unendurable to swallow, and at last, it may be—if one is attended by an eighteenth-century doctor—impossible to breathe But there is no justice in the ordinances of death, and it may be doubted whether many have been sufficiently aware of the approaching end, or if aware, sufficiently resigned, to look back with much pleasure across the fragment of terrestrial time doled out to them, as if it were a country they had travelled and at last seen from the window of a tower, clear to an almost legendary horizon If Vanbrugh was one of that inconsiderable number, he may well have been content, looking back on a life of many pleasures, singularly full and fruitful, though not altogether fortunate, though indeed charged with misfortunes For in a world where the elements destroy fast enough by themselves, even when the greater part of mankind is not entirely bent on destruction, those men are great, who by creating in every age contrive to hold the balance, and win back territory from the ruinous tide Vanbrugh died in his house at Whitehall on the 26th of March, 1726, at the age of sixty-two Five days later he was taken to St Stephen's Walbrook and laid to rest in the north aisle, in the tomb of his family, with the beauty of Wren's domed Corinthian church for perpetual coverlid

It seems that his last design had been the Pyramid at Stowe, that prodigious ornament long since demolished, and that Cobham erected it as a memorial to his friend

In one part of their Elysium there was an "antient Wood," and there, in the words of Gilbert West soon afterwards,

rivalling its lofty height, ascends,
The pointed Pyramid This too is thine,
Lamented Vanbrugh! Thus thy last Design
Among the various Structures that around,
Form'd by thy Hand, adorn the happy ground,
This sacred to thy Memory shall stand
Cobham, and grateful Friendship so command

Over the tremendous door these words, in Latin, were engraved "Among the great number of buildings designed by Sir John Vanbrugh in these gardens, Cobham desired this pyramid to be sacred to his memory "

The death of a man so generally esteemed was a grief to many, and a delight, it may be, to only one But the Duchess of Marlborough had a friend in Dr Evans who did not require a personal grudge to write the indifferent epigram by which he escaped oblivion

Under this stone, Reader, survey
Dead Sir John Vanbrugh's house of clay
Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee!

To-day no vestige of the tomb remains, and for an epitaph I turn to one who neither knew nor had any great cause to love him Mark Noble, the historian of the College of Arms "No person ever lived, or died," he wrote, "with so few enemies as Sir John Vanbrugh, owing to his pleasant wit and unaffected good humour "

POSTSCRIPT

*I must leave a great deal more I wou'd write both of Building,
Musick and Other Matters 'till an Other Post, for this will be gone
in half an hour.*

VANBRUGH

VANBRUGH left behind him a widow of thirty-two and an only son of five; for the second boy had died without baptism. When Prince William was ill, the Princess had asked Lady Vanbrugh a great many questions about Charles, who had suffered from a similar complaint, but recovered. And he seems to have been a child of spirit. Once his father had written to Carlisle, "I just now read to the Lad, what your Ldship writ of giving him your Blessing tho' he wou'd not Ask it. His answer was, I thank him for sending me his Blessing, and if he sends it me again, I'll pray to God to bless him too." By the will of the 25th of August, 1725, Charles would receive, when he came of age, the whole of the Greenwich estate, except Philip Vanbrugh's house,¹ together with the tenements adjoining the Opera House and the vaults under it, and the sum of £1,000; and in the meantime Lady Vanbrugh would spend the income on his education. No provision was made for her, the sole executrix, so it is clear that a marriage settlement had already given her the comfortable income she enjoyed until death, when in 1776, at the age of eighty-two, she was laid beside the husband who had left her fifty years before.

Among his papers, one MS. was found of extraordinary

¹ Probably "Mince Pie", where an Edward Vanbrugh was living in 1804. Philip was a captain in the Navy, and latter, as a Commissioner at Plymouth, his portrait was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

interest the fragment of an original comedy, so good, that had it been completed by him, *A Journey to London* might have stood beside his finest work. It may well be asked on what account he had suddenly returned to a profession abandoned for so long, and the answer is probably contained in a letter of 1722, in which he declares that in spite of a boom in the theatre, "not a fresh Poet Appears, they are forc'd to Act round and round upon the Old Stock, though Cibber tells me, 'tis not to be conceiv'd, how many and how bad Plays are brought to them." But if the scarcity of wit encouraged him to make good the deficiency, it appears that he had not begun until it was too late, for Cibber records,

in my last Conversation with him, (which chiefly turn'd upon what he had done towards a Comedy) he excus'd his not shewing it to me, 'till he had review'd it, confessing the Scenes were yet undigested, too long, and irregular, particularly in the Lower Characters. I have but one Excuse for publishing what he never design'd should come into the World, as it then was viz I had no other way of taking those many Faults to myself, which may be justly found in my presuming to finish it.

Cibber had finished it, and so creditably, that *The Provok'd Husband*, as he called it, became the success of 1728, and ran for twenty-eight consecutive nights, thanks partly to a brilliant performance by Anne Oldfield. But Cibber was ever a timid sort of fellow, and he took exception to Vanbrugh's plot.

All I could gather from him of what he intended in the Catastrophe, was that the Conduct of his Imaginary Fine Lady had so provok'd him, that he designed actually to have made her Husband turn her out of Doors. But when his Performance came, after his Decease, to my Hands, I thought such violent Measures, however just they might be in real Life, were too severe for Comedy. There-

fore with much ado (and 'twas as much as I could do, with Probability) I preserv'd the Lady's Chastity

Vanbrugh's plays continued to be universally popular for the next fifty years, but not so his houses, and while it may be assumed that Charles went occasionally to laugh at his father's jokes in his father's theatre, it may be doubted if he ever went a mile out of his way to look at Blenheim or Kings Weston, and was not indeed a little ashamed of them, so hypnotic is the hold of fashion on the young. In 1734, when he was a boy of fourteen reading Juvenal and Persius, the broken army of Baroque was still fighting here and there in remote parts of the country, and Hawksmoor, a querulous and gouty old man, was building the superb Mausoleum at Castle Howard, the last great monument of the School of Wren. It was still possible for the author of a poem called "The Man of Taste" to put in a word for Vanbrugh, even though humorously, as if a sophisticated person today should profess to adore Kipling

Sure wretched Wren was taught by bungling Jones
To murder mortar, and disfigure stones!
Who in Whitehall can symmetry discern?
I reckon Covent-Garden Church a Barn
Nor hate I less thy vile Cathedral, Paul!
The Choir's too big, the cupola's too small
Substantial walls and heavy roofs I like,
'Tis *Vanbrugh's* structures that my fancy strike
Such noble ruins every pile would make
I wish they'd tumble for the prospect's sake

He had begun to build too late, and ceased too early, to leave a very large body of work behind him, and he has since been villainously handled by fire and man. Seaton Delaval burnt, Eastbury and Claremont

demolished, and the gardens of Stowe and Claremont changed beyond recognition, are only a part of the story. In fact there is not one of his great works, not even Blenheim, that was made, or now remains, exactly as he intended it. Another ten years of life no doubt would have given the world more proof of his genius, but I fear they might also have given *him* some proof of the world's estrangement, for all that the Duke of Newcastle had become Secretary of State. He could never have adapted himself enough to retain popularity, and it lies in no man's power to arrest the inexplicable movement of taste. One century of greatness had seen the journey of an art begun and ended—the exact century (1619–1719) that divided the Banqueting House, Whitehall, from Seaton Delaval—the purest calm of Classic from the last convulsion of Baroque. Reaction and repetition were bound to follow. For him, there was no more to say.

When Charles was eighteen he went to Lausanne to finish, and presently became a member of its "Company of noble Fusiliers," and then, on his return to England, an ensign in the Coldstream Guards. But advancement was slow, and in 1744 he appealed to the Duke of Newcastle to secure him a lieutenantancy. "Though I have not the honour to be much known to your Grace," he wrote, "yet your having had the Goodness to say you should not be unwilling to serve me, emboldens me to address you." "I hope your Grace will assist him to get it done, for which I shall be very much obliged," his mother added in a covering note. Her son had entered his father's old profession, but would leave it differently.

Once again England was at war with France, and on

the 11th of May, 1745, Charles Vanbrugh found himself on the disastrous field of Fontenoy. Leading his men in one of those celebrated charges of infantry, he fell, wounded in the thigh, and after a night of great suffering, when midnight had announced the dawn of his twenty-fifth birthday, he died ¹

The terrible task of writing home to England fell to his best friend, Joseph Yorke, a son of Lord Hardwicke, who was aide-de-camp to their commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge. Not daring to submit Lady Vanbrugh to the direct violence of the written word, however diffidently introduced, he sent to some intimate of hers a letter none the less remarkable in its delicacy for being written on the second day after a murderous battle.

Mr Jones—After the letter I had the Honour to write to my Lady Vanbrugh with regard to the welfare of my Dearest Friend, to which I got him to write a Postscript, I know not how to sit down to write so very different an account at present, not only from the shocking circumstance of being the person to send the most unwelcome news her ears have ever heard, but from the miserable unhappy state I am myself in, whilst I write this. It would be ridiculous in me to screen his death from you, how to break it to his poor mother God above alone knows, and yet, yet it must be done. I can not comfort any one, tho I wish it, to say I have lost the only one, in all my acquaintance with whom I had made so strict a friendship, is what makes my Blood freeze with horror. My Support, my Comfort, my Adviser, my Everything is gone, the thought makes me distracted. This only pleases me, in the Reflection that after having suffer'd with unparallel'd Heroism and sweetness of Temper, 20 hours of the most racking Torture, the Almighty of his goodness took him to Himself.

I must tell you the particulars of his death. For some time we

¹ "We remained upon the field of battle three hours," wrote Horace Walpole. "I fear, too many of us remain there still!" And Vanbrugh's name was on the list of young Guards officers that he quoted.

had hopes, but we found yesterday the Ball so fix'd to the main bone of the Thigh that it was in vain to attempt the taking it out. However, with the assistance of Mr Middleton and Mr Adair (the best Surgeons in the Army, and whose care of him was very particular) we made an incision upon the part yesterday but without success. I saw him a few hours before he dyed, and kiss'd him, I was sure for the last time, and so it happen'd, for at 12 o'clock last night he was freed from his misery, and left his Friends in despare. The last words he spoke was his concern for his Mother, and his regret in leaving me, nothing else affected him in dying. His Enemys felt the effect of his Courage, in the day of battle, with 40 men he routed a whole French Battallion. But alas! his friends feel the loss too deeply now. Adieu Comfort your selves. He dyed in his Calling, in the Eye of his Prince, & like a Hero for his Country I can no more

Your afflicted miserable Friend & Servant,
Joseph Yorke

At noon on the day this letter was written the young soldier had been buried in Ath. Let us leave him in the obscurity of a common hero's grave with this reflection that had John Vanbrugh died at the same age, following the same unprofitable calling, he would have been as little remembered

SEATON DELAVAL

*My head is sick, cries Seaton Delaval,
It is in fever from this bitter mould
I hear a multitude of voices bawl;
For once I was too hot, but now am cold,
My head, my head, moans Seaton Delaval,
A great house to a colliery's dull ear.—
Yet, between you and me, in that dark hall
Pigeons alone will welcome you this year.*

*Laugh Vanbrugh! you whose laughs outlasted you:
A plaster statue and a poxy wit.
Lord Foppington has bowed the world adieu.
Up here, he knew the wind: would swear at it
Sawing his midnight sashes with blunt strife—
And then fire stained it like a surgeon's knife!*

Appendix One

Minor Works and Attributions

Some of these works have already been mentioned in the course of the book.

"GOOSE PIE HOUSE," Little Scotland Yard, 1899. "If memory is to be depended on, Sir John's plan consisted of a hall or lobby, stairs, parlour, and side closets, one his study, the other his book-repository; above, dining-room, and small bedrooms." (*Gent's Mag.* Vol. 85, p. 424.) Altered and enlarged in the last century, it became the first home of the United Services Museum and was popularly known as the "Pill Box." It was pulled down on Oct. 1, 1898, to make way for the War Office, after the Museum had been removed to the Banqueting House. (Wren Soc. IV. & picture in "The Old Palace of Whitehall," E. Sheppard.)

WHITTON HALL, 1703. Designed for Sir Godfrey Kneller: a red-brick building, possibly in the half-medieval style that Vanbrugh favoured for small houses, such as his own. It survives, but altered beyond recognition, as the College of Military Music.

THE KENSINGTON CHARITY SCHOOL, designed by Vanbrugh in 1711 and destroyed in 1815. A very typical brick and stone building with a tall central tower. (Wren Soc. VII, pp. 141, 242-3.)

THE OLD KITCHEN, ST. JAMES'S PALACE, 1715. Characteristic of Vanbrugh and probably his design. A brick structure with semi-circular and bull's-eye windows, surviving, but not in use. (Wren Soc. VII, pp. 216, 218, 223). Vol. XII contains what is possibly an early suggestion for it, only remarkable because of a deliberate solecism: one large central pilaster with a window on either side.

A SUMMER-HOUSE FOR SIR ROBERT WALPOLE IN CHELSEA, Oct. 1715: "I have made an estimate of your fabrick, which comes to £270; but I have allowed for doing some things in it, in a better manner than perhaps you will think necessary—so I believe it may be done to your mind for £200." (Letters, p. 63.)

Appendix

A PEW IN ESHER CHURCH FOR THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE NOV 1716? "I have drawn a Design out for a Seat in Esher Church, which I hope will do Arthur is Copying it out fair, which when done, I'll send it to the Brigadier [Watkins]" The pew, or rather gallery, exists, with Corinthian columns and a pediment, but does not especially recall Vanbrugh

FLOORS CASTLE, Kelso, for the Duke of Roxburghe, 1718? This is the largest and most interesting of the houses attributed to Vanbrugh, and if correctly, his only recorded work in Scotland Tradition and general likelihood agree, but unfortunately the entire castle was "transformed into a sumptuous Tudor pile" in 1849 It is said by Hindes Groome to have been "built for the first Duke, by Vanbrugh, in 1718," in a style "severely plain, not to say heavy-looking," and this description is borne out by two oil paintings at Floors, in which the castle appears at a distance, in one, immediately over Rennie's charming "Waterloo Bridge" of Kelso (Reproduced in Neale's Seats, Vol VI) We see a stark, castellated fortress, patterned with sash windows—just such an exterior as Vanbrugh was giving to Lumley, not so very far off, about this time Moreover the existing castle displays the characteristic plan, of wings projecting to compose a forecourt, and it is much more likely that the original building was refaced, than that it was rebuilt It is a Gothic Castle Howard But most indicative of all is the superb situation on a natural terrace or "Floor", with ruined Roxburghe Castle to the right, a picturesque township to the left, a river winding between them, and beyond, the grave profile of the Border hills Looking about us, we are inclined to agree with the local bard who said,

all the grouping marks a master hand

That Claude, or Poussin, well might emulate

I believe that Vanbrugh did suggest the site and the design of this house, but left its construction largely in other hands

AYLESBURY COUNTY HALL, 1720 Alternative schemes had been prepared by two local builders and the magistrates appealed to Vanbrugh to make the choice He chose that of "Mr Harris & Co" which was accordingly carried out, and remains to-day Now either Mr Harris was a disciple or, what is more likely, Vanbrugh

touched up the design, for the building is more than a little in his manner and was for long attributed to him. He was paid 20 gns for his pains (Records of Bucks, Vol XII, 56)

ALTERATIONS AT AUDLEY END for the Earl of Suffolk, 1721-22. The least creditable of all his undertakings. Every age has its blind spot in the history of art, and to Vanbrugh's it was the Jacobean. Having no respect for this wonderful palace, which is now a wraith of its former self, he advised the destruction of the grand court, "in the room of which he built two ugly brick walls, which cost £1,600." Later he seems to have pruned his way all round the house. He did, however, extend the hall with a fine staircase beyond a screen, reminiscent of those at Grimsthorpe, and it may be said in his defence that Lord Suffolk was probably determined on some reduction in size (Walpole Soc., Vol XVI History of Audley End, R. G. Neville)

KENSINGTON WATER TOWER, "on the Palace Green." A bold machicolated tower, with battlemented turrets. It can be reconstructed fairly well from the description in the Gents Mag Vol 85 (1815), p 423, and must surely have been by Vanbrugh.

MORPETH TOWN HALL. Immediately recognisable as Vanbrugh's, yet on closer inspection, clearly Victorian. The explanation that it was burnt down about 1875 and rebuilt to the same design, one made by him, no doubt, for Lord Carlisle.

BRITWELL COURT, Oxfordshire. The hall in this charming little house beneath the Chilterns strongly recalls that at Shotover, not many miles away, and is quite in the Vanbrugh manner. The architect of both is perhaps more likely to have been Hawksmoor.

THREE COFFEE HOUSES IN OXFORD. In Georgian afternoons, undergraduates from New College, Hertford and Wadham might be found in Bagg's Coffee House "at the corner of Holywell facing the Kings Arms," and "built, by the way, out of the surplus materials from Blenheim by Sir John Vanbrugh, who also built a similar house in New Inn Hall Lane, and another in St Aldate's, near Folly Bridge," none of which remain (P. Bliss, Life of Anthony Wood)

Appendix

VANBRUGH HOUSE, St Michael's St, Oxford The appearance of this remarkable house, with its Doric centre, justifies the name (Photo in *Country Life*, Vanbrugh Vol p lxiv)

WORKS AT PLYMOUTH DOCK, "projected in the time of King William III, when Vanbrugh was engaged to build a wharf and store-houses" (A E Richardson, *Georgian England*, pp 49, 122)

ROBIN HOOD'S WELL On the Great North Road beyond Doncaster, just where Robin Hood so rightly made the Bishop of Hereford sing a mass and "dance in his boots," there stands a little rusticated well-head, "raised at the expense of the Earl of Carlisle, under the peculiar direction of Sir John Vanbrugh", and there an old man used to dip a black pot in crystal water that had sweetened the tongues of travellers for a thousand years (*Hert MSS Comm Vol VI, Harley's Journey to North Picture in South Yorkshire, J Hunter, Vol I, p 488*)

MANOR FARM, SOMERSBY, Lincs Next door to the rectory in which Tennyson was born, and in the same county as Grimsby, is a red-brick battlemented house with a tradition, and an unmistakable air, of having been designed by Vanbrugh Those who cannot believe that a poet invents anything out of his head consider it the origin of the Moated Grange (Drawing in J C Walters' *In Tennyson Land*)

A GATEWAY AT MALTON (near Castle Howard) and the pyramidal LOCK-UP AT WHEATLEY (near Shotover) will also be by Vanbrugh, or Hawksmoor, and he seems to have done some work at ADDISCOMBE HOUSE, CROYDON, and at WOOLWICH ARSENAL (Letters, p xxxviii)

A DESIGN FOR A LARGE COUNTRY HOUSE by Vanbrugh will appear in Vol XVII of the Wren Society in 1940 This drawing, which I have been permitted to glance at, is an important discovery, and is ascribed by the editor to a date between the designing of Castle Howard and Blenheim Other designs that can be attributed to Vanbrugh will be found in the volumes of the Society already published

Appendix Two

The Blenheim Warrant

TO ALL TO WHOM these Presents shall come, The Right Honourable SIDNEY Lord Godolphin, Lord High Treasurer of *England*, sendeth Greeting. WHEREAS his Grace *John Duke of Marlborough*, hath resolv'd to erect a large Fabrick, for a Mansion House, at *Woodstock* in the County of Oxon. KNOW ye, That I the said *Sidney Lord Godolphin*, AT THE REQUEST AND DESIRE of the said Duke of *Marlborough* have constituted and appointed, and do hereby FOR, AND ON THE BEHALF of the said Duke, constitute and appoint *John Vanbrugh Esq*: to be Surveyor of all the Works and Buildings so intended to be erected or made at *Woodstock* aforesaid; And do hereby Authorise and Impower him the said *John Vanbrugh*, to make and sign Contracts with any Persons for Materials, And also with any Artificers or Workmen to be employed about the said Buildings, in such manner as he shall judge proper, for carrying on the said Work, in the best and most advantageous manner that may be, And likewise to employ such day Labourers and Carriages from time to time, as he shall find necessary for the said Service, and to do all other matters and things, as may be any ways conducive to the effectual Performance of what is directed by the said DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH in relation to the said Works, And I do hereby authorise and require the said *John Vanbrugh* to lay before me from time to time (IN THE ABSENCE of the said Duke) an Account of his proceedings herein, together with what he shall think necessary to be observ'd or wherein any further Instructions may be wanting. To the end the same may be given accordingly. Dated *June* the 9th. 1705

GODOLPHIN

Appendix Three

Reasons Offer'd for Preserving Some Part of the Old Manor

June 11th, 1709

There is perhaps no one thing, which the most Polite part of Mankind have more universally agreed in; than the Vallue they have ever set upon the Remains of distant Times. Nor amongst the Severall kinds of those Antiquitys, are there any so much regarded, as those of Buildings; Some for their Magnificence, or Curious Workmanship; and others, as they move more lively and pleasing Reflections (than History without their Aid can do) On the Persons who have Inhabited them; On the Remarkable things which have been transacted in them, Or the extraordinary Occasions of Erecting them. *As I believe it cannot be doubted, but if Travellers many Ages hence, shall be shewn The Very House in which so great a Man Dwelt, as they will then read the Duke of Marlborough in Story; And that they Shall be told, it was not only his Favourite Habitation, but was Erected for him by the Bounty of the Queen And with the Approbation of the People, As a Monument of the Greatest Services and Honours that any Subject had ever done his Country: I believe, tho' they may not find Art enough in the Builder, to make them Admire the Beauty of the Fabrick they will find Wonder enough in the Story, to make 'em pleas'd with the Sight of it.*

I hope I may be forgiven, if I make some faint Application of what I say of Blenheim, to the Small Remains of ancient Woodstock Manour.

It can't indeed be said, it was Erected on so Noble nor on so justifiable an Occasion, But it was rais'd by One of the Bravest and most Warlike of the English Kings; and tho' it has not been Fam'd, as a Monument of his Arms, *it has been tenderly regarded as the Scene of his Affections. Nor amongst the Multitude of People who come daily to View what is raising to the Memory of the Great Battle of Blenheim; Are there any that do not run eagerly to See what Ancient Remains are to be found, of Rosamonds Bower. It may perhaps be worth some little Reflection Upon what may be said, if the Very footsteps of it Are no more to be found.*

Appendix

But if the Historical Argument Stands in need of Assistance, there is Still much to be said on Other Considerations

That Part of the Park which is Seen from the North Front of the New Building, has Little Variety of Objects, Nor dos the Country beyond it Afford any of Vallue, It therefore Stands in Need of all the helps that can be given, which are only Two, Buildings, and Plantations These rightly dispos'd will indeed Supply all the wants of Nature in that Place And the Most Agreeable Disposition is to Mix them in which this Old Manour *gives so happy an Occasion* for, that were the inclosure filld with Trees (principally Fine Yews and Hollys) Promiscuously Set to grow up in a Wild Thicket, So that all the Building left, (which is only the Habitable Part and the Chappel) might Appear in Two Risings amongst 'em, it wou'd make One of the Most Agreeable Objects that the best of Landskip Painters can invent And if on the Contrary this Building is taken away, there then remains nothing but an Irregular, Ragged Ungovernable Hill, the deformitys of which are not to be cured *but by a Vast Expence, And that at last will only remove an Ill Object* but not produce a good One, whereas to finish the present Wall for the Inclosures, to forme the Sloops and make the Plantation (which is all that is now wanting to Compleat the Whole Designe) wou'd not Cost Two Hundred pounds

I take the Liberty to offer this Paper with a Picture to Explain what I endeavour to Describe, That if the Present Direction for destroying the Building, shou'd happen hereafter to be Repented of, I may not be blam'd for neglecting to set in the truest Light I cou'd, a Thing that Seem'd at least to me so very Matteriall,

J VANBRUGH

Appendix Four

Van's House

Built from the Ruins of Whitehall that was Burnt (1703)

In times of old, when Time was young,
And Poets their own verses sung,
A verse could draw a stone or beam,
That now would overload a team;
Lead 'em a dance of many a mile,
Then rear 'em to a goodly pile.
Each number had its different power:
Heroick strains could build a tower;
Sonnets, or elegies to Chloris,
Might raise a house about two stories;
A lyric ode would slate; a catch
Would tile; an epigram would thatch.

But to their own or landlord's cost,
Now Poets feel this art is lost.
Not one of all our tuneful throng
Can raise a lodging *for a song*.
For Jove considered well the case,
Observed they grew a numerous race,
And should they build as fast as write,
'Twould ruin undertakers¹ quite.
This evil therefore to prevent,
He wisely changed their element:
On earth the god of Wealth was made
Sole patron of the building trade,
Leaving the Wits the spacious air
With licence to *build castles* there:
And 'tis conceived their old pretence
To lodge in garrets, comes from thence.

¹ Contractors.

Premising thus, in modern way,
The better half we have to say,
Sing, Muse, the house of Poet Van,
In higher strains than we began

Van (for 'tis fit the reader know it)
Is both a Herald and a Poet,
No wonder then, if nicely skill'd
In both capacities to build
As Herald, he can in a day
Repair a *house* gone to decay,
Or by achievement, arms, device,
Erect a new one in a trice,
And as a Poet, he has skill
To build in speculation still
"Great Jove!" he cry'd, "the art restore,
To build by verse as heretofore,
And make my Muse the architect,
What palaces shall we erect!
No longer shall forsaken Thames
Lament his old Whitehall in flames,
A pile shall from its ashes rise
Fit to invade, or prop the skies "

Jove smiled, and like a gentle god,
Consenting with the usual nod,
Told Van, he knew his talent best,
And left the choice to his own breast
So Van resolv'd to write a farce,
But well perceiving wit was scarce,
With cunning that defect supplies,
Takes a French play as lawful prize,
Steals thence his plot and every joke,
Not once suspecting Jove would smoke,
And (like a wag) set down to write
Would whisper to himself, "a bite"
Then from the motley, mingled style
Proceeded to erect his pile

Appendix

So men of old, to gain renown, did
Build Babel with their tongues confounded
Jove saw the cheat, but thought it best
To turn the matter to a jest
Down from Olympus top he slides,
Laughing as if he'd burst his sides
Ay, thought the god, are these your tricks?
Why then old plays deserve old bricks!
And since you're sparing of your stuff,
Your building shall be small enough
He spake, and grudging, lent his aid,
The experienced bricks, that knew their trade,
(As being bricks at second hand)
Now move, and now in order stand

The building, as the Poet writ,
Rose in proportion to his wit
And first the prologue built a wall,
So wide as to encompass all
The scene, a wood, produc'd no more
Than a few scrubby trees before
The plot as yet lay deep, and so
A cellar next was dug below
But this a work so hard was found,
Two acts it cost him under ground
Two other acts, we may presume,
Were spent in building each a room
Thus far advanc'd, he made a shift
To raise a roof with act the fifth
The epilogue behind did frame
A place not decent here to name

Now Poets from all quarters ran,
To see the house of brother Van
Look'd high and low, walk'd often round,
But no such house was to be found
One asks the watermen hard by,
"Where may the Poet's palace lie?"

Appendix

Another of the Thames inquires,
If he has seen its gilded spires?
At length they in the rubbish spy
A thing resembling a Goose-Pye
Thither in haste the Poets throng,
And gaze in silent wonder long,
Till one in raptures thus began
To praise the pile and builder Van

“Thrice happy Poet! who mayst trail
Thy house about thee like a snail,
Or harnessed to a nag, at ease
Take journey in it like a chaise,
Or in a boat, whene’er thou wilt,
Canst make it serve thee for a tilt!
Capacious house! ’tis owned by all
Thou’rt well contriv’d, though thou are small,
For every Wit in Britain’s isle
May lodge within thy spacious pile
Like Bacchus thou, as Poets feign,
Thy mother burnt, art born again,
Born like a phoenix from the flame,
But neither bulk nor shape the same,
As animals of largest size
Corrupt to maggots, worms, and flies,
A type of modern wit and style,
The rubbish of an ancient pile
So chemists boast they have a power,
From the dead ashes of a flower,
Some faint resemblance to produce,
But not the virtue, taste, or juice
So modern rhymers wisely blast
The poetry of ages past,
Which after they have overthrown
They from its ruins build their own ”

JONATHAN SWIFT

The History of Van's House (1708)

When mother Clud had rose from play,
And call'd to take the cards away,
Van saw, but seem'd not to regard,
How Miss pick'd every painted card,
And busy both with hand and eye,
Soon rear'd a house two stories high
Van's gemus, without thought or lecture,
Is hugely turn'd to architecture
He view'd the edifice and smil'd,
Vow'd it was pretty for a child
It was so perfect in its kind,
He kept the model in his mind

But when he found the boys at play,
And saw them dabbling in their clay,
He stood behind a stall to lurk
And mark the progress of their work,
With true delight observ'd 'em all
Raking up mud to build a wall
The plan he much admir'd, and took
The model in his table book,
Thought himself now exactly skill'd,
And so resolv'd a house to build,
A real house, with rooms and stairs,
Five times at least as big as theirs!
Taller than Miss's by two yards,
Not a sham thing of clay or cards!
And so he did, for in a while
He built up such a monstrous pile,
That no two charmen could be found
Able to lift it from the ground
Still at Whitehall it stands in view
Just in the place where first it grew
There all the little schoolboys run,
Envyng to see themselves outdone

From such deep rudiments as these,
Van is become, by due degrees,
For building famed, and justly reckon'd
At court Vitruvius the second
No wonder, since wise authors show,
That best foundations must be low,
And now the Duke has wisely ta'en him
To be his architect at Blenheim

But raillery at once apart,
If this rule holds in every art,
Or if His Grace were no more skill'd in
The art of battering walls than building,
We might expect to see next year,
A mouse-trap man chief engineer

JONATHAN SWIFT

Appendix Five

The French Vanbrugh: Germain Boffrand

A curious parallel to the story of this book may be found in the career of the French architect Boffrand, who was born in 1667. Like Vanbrugh, his senior by three years, Boffrand first of all achieved a reputation for writing plays. Then a perspective drawing aroused the interest of J. H. Mansart, who took him into his office and became to him a kind of Wren. At first he was merely employed as a draughtsman, but in 1714 he designed the Hôtel de Torcy in Paris, and later the Hôtel de Seignelay, and already in these small, plain buildings displayed a real similarity of style to Vanbrugh.

The similarity in the whole of his work may be described as a love of round-headed openings, barbarous constructions, immensity in scale, and novelty in plan. His Hôtel Amelot contains a small elliptical forecourt, half enclosed in an immense order of Composite pilasters; while in his second design for La Malgrange, a palace near Nancy, there was a central, circular Hall 144 feet in diameter, from which projected four radiating wings in the form of a flattened \times , joined at the extremities of the narrower angles by colonnades. This fantastically wasteful and inconvenient plan has no parallel even in Vanbrugh, it is true; but with what should one compare the elevations that resulted, the skyline of three towers, the strange angles, the great order, the round-arched windows, the buttressed cupola, and the trophies, if not with Scaton Delaval and Blenheim?

Nevertheless the similarity must not be exaggerated; for there is nothing of Vanbrugh in his finest work, the Louis Quinze decorations at the Hôtel de Soubise, and it would be impossible for a Frenchman to be so heavy in detail. Moreover he was generally quite inferior, his extravagances being more like leaps in the dark, such as Archer was taking in England, than the logical developments of an individual style, or soul. In character, however, the similarity was marked, and Boffrand was a charming, witty, modest fellow who did not know what it was to be jealous. "*Il cherchoit incessamment à se divertir et aimoit beaucoup la raillerie.*" He died in 1754, eighty-eight years old, a poor man who had wasted his money.

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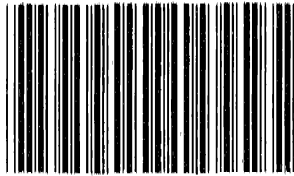
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